

Punches to pixels

Ruari McLean

WALTER TRACY
Letters of Credit
219pp. Gordon Fraser. £16.50.
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The *raison d'être* of Walter Tracy's *Letters of Credit* is expressed on one of its last pages: "The abundance of types now available, and the rate at which new designs are introduced, ought to be wholly beneficial; but they seem to have had a soporific effect on taste and judgment. . . . A number of faces introduced in recent years, text types as well as display, can only have been designed by the incompetent and produced by the cynical." So Mr Tracy sets out to help us understand how modern typefaces are made, and how to judge them.

The design and production of typefaces intended for continuous reading have always been highly skilled and complicated affairs, so much so that there have never been more than a few successful practitioners in any generation. Tracy is today one of this select company, and one who has joined it, unusually, from being, in his earlier days, an apprentice compositor.

In the old days, and indeed well into the

twentieth century, typefaces were produced by cutting punches in steel for every letter, accent and punctuation mark, in every size required. A book fount in a single size may require five (or if it includes bold, seven) alphabets, with possibly three sets of figures, making around 300 different items or "sorts". The punches then had to be struck into softer metal to make matrices, and the type cast in molten metal from the mould holding the matrix. The skill, or art, was to get all these sorts not only right in themselves, but when composed into words or sentences, to harmonize so perfectly that the whole effect – page after page – was pleasing, easy and attractive to read. It was a laborious process, and since every size of type was a separate operation, adjustments could be made from size to size as the designer saw fit. His eye was the sole arbiter.

Part of the trouble we are in today started when it became possible to make a new size of type simply by photographing an existing size up or down. Theoretically every size required, from 4 point to 72 point, or larger, can be made from one master fount in, say, 12 point. The manufacturers leaped at this opportunity to save money. Tracy shows, in illustration after illustration, the unfortunate results. The classic example is provided by "small caps",

which are capital letters made to the x-height of the fount, that is, they align with the lower-case letter x. They are used when words are required to be set in capital letters, and yet true capitals would look far too obtrusive on the page. If the capitals of a fount are reduced photographically to the fount x-height, they no longer look right because the thick strokes have become too thin; and small caps are also usually made slightly wider, in proportion.

Typefaces are now produced electronically: letters are "digitized", or broken down into dots ("pixels") which can be stored by the computer and called out "at a speed which could not have been imagined a few years ago". Tracy's account is highly lucid, but it is not necessary for the ordinary reader, editor, printer or even typographer to be a complete master of the cathode ray tube, pixels, laser beams and so on. Types can be produced at low resolutions of 600 lines per inch and will have jagged edges – which may be disguised, as Tracy points out, "if the press-work is low grade and the paper surface fluffy, as is the case with newspaper and some government service work, where economy in cost is more important than aesthetics" – or in high resolutions of 2,000 lines per inch (lpi). In Tracy's summing-up, "High resolution produces quality, low resolution is cost effective, and the printer con-

templating the purchase of a system has to make his own evaluation of these two factors, according to the class of work he has to do. There is an obvious temptation to choose the cheaper and faster system. A printer of quality does not succumb to it."

It is the old story: we are continually being offered today things that are faster and cheaper, but not better, than we had before. The standards fought for – and achieved – by Stanley Morison, Francis Meynell, Oliver Simon, Jan Tschichold, Karl Klingenspor and the rest, are still required; but they have to be attained by different methods. We still need well-designed typefaces, bold type that contrasts properly with its related roman, lining and non-lining figures, properly designed small caps, etc., etc.; we will get them only if the customers – authors, publishers, typographers and so on – insist on getting them, and go on insisting. This book explains how, and why.

Walter Tracy has excellent detailed sections on many important aspects of type design in general, such as true italic versus sloping roman, numerals, sans-serif, and so on; and in Part Two of his book he includes appraisals of the designs of Jan van Krimpen, the Americans Frederic W. Goudy and W. A. Dwiggins, Rudolf Koch and Morison. *Letters of Credit* is a thoroughly well-informed and wise guide.

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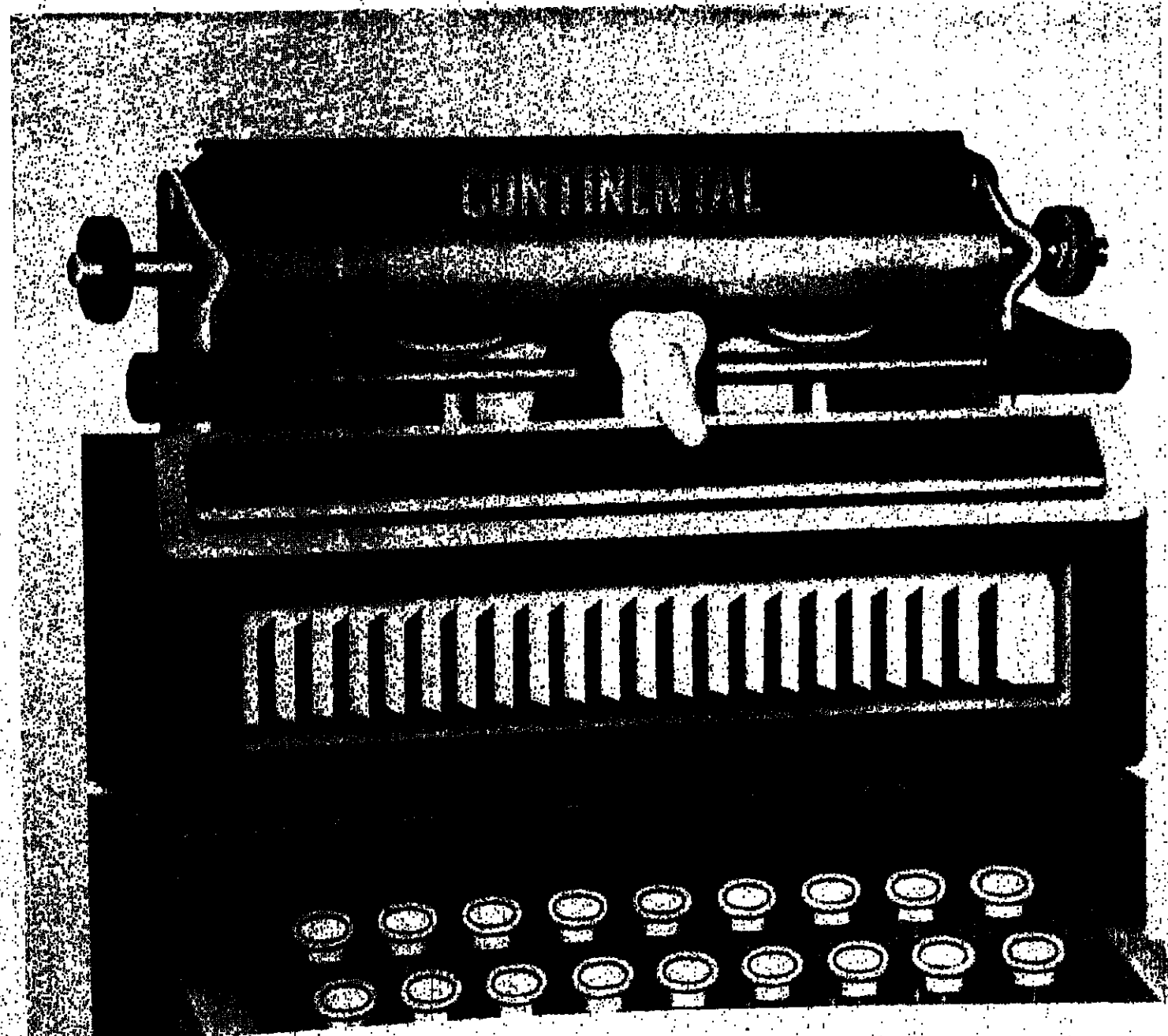
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When Eliot came to know Seferis he might well have recognized many aspects of himself in the younger man. In 1932 Seferis noted ironically that Eliot must be the first poet he had ever influenced. How else explain the "inclinations and quests" they had in common? Partly, he concluded, it was owing to the early interest of each in "Laforge, Corbiere etc." His own sense of the time had been close to Eliot's. "Gerontion," *The Waste Land*, "The Hollow Men," *Sweeney Agonistes* and "Difficulties of a

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Statesman" had expressed "what we all knew, whether we wished to live now, or wished to die" (like the poet Kuryotakis whose suicide in 1928 shocked Seferis's generation). He wondered in 1952, no less than he had twenty years before, what drew him so powerfully to Eliot. The one stumbling-block for Seferis was Eliot's "militant Anglo-Catholicism". He rejected the lines in *Ash Wednesday*:

Who walked between the violet and the violet
Who walked between
The various ranks of varied green

as being "more of a heraldic ornament than a genuine image". Comparing Cavafy and Eliot he described them as the Hellenic and the Anglo-Latin. In spite of a shared concern for European civilization, and an interest in Dante whom Seferis had discovered in 1935 "as a teacher, a master of the art", Eliot's Latin allegiance could not be his. He dismissed the view put forward by Eliot that the near-Christian sensibility of Aeneas was superior to anything found in Homer, adducing against this Books VI and XXIV of the *Iliad*.

Reading both Seferis's criticism and his poetry, critics have not failed to see how much they have gained from Eliot. Not only did he awaken the sense of the past in the present, but also he brought "something that could not fail to move a Greek: the element of tragedy". Seferis's apprenticeship to Eliot enabled him rapidly to become himself: this shows already in *Mythistorima*. The difference between them is that Seferis turned for his understanding of history to purely Greek sources: in part to Cavafy, more significantly to the tragedians and, above all, Aeschylus, and also to a man of the people, Makriyannis the peasant general in the War of Independence, whose *Memoirs* constantly refreshed him with their native honesty and the rough-hewn eloquence that showed "a man in the stature of man . . . neither superman nor worm".

Seferis found no difficulty in linking the wisdom of Makriyannis with Aeschylean drama. The history of Greece through the ages has been predominantly tragic, and Seferis, destined all through life to be "storm-tossed by military risings, dictatorships, changes of régime", to witness destruction and know despair, could discern as early as 1935 in human affairs the inexorable order of the *Oresteia*:

I have followed so many times
the road from the murderer to the slain
from the slain to the retribution
and from retribution to the next murder . . .

As in Argos, "the Holy Ones [Semnes] began to whistle / in the scanty grass". This was "our fate".

The "Holy Ones" were the Furies who in the final play of the trilogy consented to settle in Athens as benign goddesses, the Eumenides, under the Areopagus where justice was dispensed by its Court. Seferis took great comfort from the Aeschylean doctrine of "an austere fate which looks after the balance of the universe". He reminded his audience in the speech accepting the Nobel Prize that "in ancient tragedy . . . the man who exceeds the mean must be punished by the Erinyes". And he liked to stress that Heraclitus had seen the same principle at work in physical phenomena.

To a politically engaged friend who had accused him of having no ideology but merely feelings, Seferis protested that to himself it seemed his writing had "crystallized round an organically moral stem". That impression is borne out by the grave concern for Greek values which intensifies in the poems from *Mythistorima* onwards, growing very evident in *Logbook II* and *Thrush*. His satirical tendency, as displayed in the poem he wrote on the king's return in 1935 or in another of 1939 on an equestrian statue in Bucharest, is not missing from *Logbook II*. A pelican in the Cairo zoo "had the air of a downtrodden prime minister" - Tsouderos was seen by him as an abject nonentity. But the major note in his war-time poems is the tragic, and they rise to become a meditation on human destiny. That is no less true of the poems about Cyprus.

Orfanidis points out that Seferis had taken an almost feverish interest in the rising of 1931. He had been aware of the Cyprus problem over the years since then, and particularly when he accompanied the Regent, Archbishop Damaskinos, to London in 1946 as Director of his

Political Bureau. In November 1953, when he first visited Cyprus, trouble was already beginning to seethe, but military action by EOKA still lay eighteen months ahead. Seferis's first impression of all had a political bearing. Cyprus gave him the sense of Greece "suddenly" as spacious, wider". Here was a people who spoke Greek, but did not depend on the Athens government. Seferis had already lamented the narrowing of horizons once Hellenism became identified with the Greek state. He seriously wondered at the moment of his arrival whether *Enosis* would be for the good of Cyprus, were it to be turned into "a Greek province like Corfu or Salonika." What he now discovered had a personal meaning that de-

Joseph was walking, and I walked not . . . And I looked up into the pole of heaven and saw it standing still . . . Seferis's poem, completed in 1955, similarly describes a moment of arrest in time, and the girl is assumed into heaven, like a Holy Virgin but not with specifically Christian meaning.

So *Logbook III* begins and ends with a vision of the miraculous. This was the gift to Seferis from Cyprus. The two poems in question, not unreasonably though this further dimension enhances the sequence, hold no more than a marginal interest for Orfanidis. While he is scrupulous to insist that Seferis's poetry seeks to transcend the merely political, its more direct relation to the political scene engages



"Kreta", 1937, by Herbert List. It is reproduced from Herbert List: Photographs 1930-1970 by Gunter Meiken (73pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.50, 0 500 54071 3).

manded utterance in poetry. His wanderings in Asia Minor had shown him a graveyard of Hellenism; but here in Cyprus it came alive, in a simple, almost archaic community which reminded him of Smyrna, with customs he had not encountered since childhood, and on a soil where miracles could still happen. For nine hundred years, he wrote to his sister, the Cypriots had endured foreign domination, by Crusaders, Venetians, the Turks and the British, but they had remained "unimaginably true to themselves". The effect of this first visit was like a home-coming, to the immemorial Hellenic world and to his creative self so long suppressed by public duties.

The light of Attica always seemed in his eyes to be life-enabling, to give a "tremendous assurance". The first poem of *Logbook III* opens with an allusion to Homer: "And you see the light of the sun as the ancients said". Here in Cyprus that light is

the golden net
where things palpitate like the fish
that a great angel draws in
with the nets of the fishermen.

The final poem of the series, "Engomi", has the same note of miracle. A week after arrival Seferis had been taken to see excavations in progress of a Minoan city. "Streets, houses sketched in with their foundations the shape of a life that had ceased". The mild splendour of the afternoon, the unusual light, the beauty of a girl at work in the trenches, moved him to set down the first lines for a poem:

ENGOMI
Give a soul to the clouds if you can
give the endless silence a voice,
this plain might be in the god's embrace
the light dances and does not dance
and the girl's breast firm and tender
signifies the lips of an unknown infant.

In the midday hours a little later

I have wanted to rest here in this place
from the snail of the desert.

The light that "dances and does not dance" afterwards reminded him of a passage from the Apocryphal Gospel of St James which he had copied into the preceding journal. "And

him, and the other poems of *Logbook III* are all more relevant to his purpose. They were written between 1953 and 1955, apart from "Memory I" and "Memory II", belonging to 1950 when he had visited Smyrna and Ephesus. In the former poem an old shepherd gives him a reed flute because "I had said 'Good evening'; / the others have struck out every salutation". Slaughter has become the normal day's work (*merokamato*) "as you prune or perform surgery, methodically, without passion". The poet has to bury the flute in his garden, while hoping still for "a resurrection one dawn", when Aphrodite will rise again from the sea. He would have played his flute but for shame before "the other world" where love prevails even with the "Holy Ones" as with man and inanimate nature.

The second poem tells of an encounter with an old man, revealed as Heraclitus, among the ruins of Ephesus. He takes the road to the reed-choked harbour of ancient days. The poet remembers him calling aloud in the orchestra of a deserted Greek theatre: "Let me hear my brother!" This appeal, like the reference to methodical killing in "Memory I", Orfanidis relates to the legacy of the civil war.

"Memory wherever you touch it is anguish." This exclamation in the first of the two poems was wrung from Seferis by the condition of Greece, even of the world too, in 1950: "What they kill by day they get rid of by carting it behind the ridge". When he contemplates Cyprus the anguish persists. "Memory I" is placed immediately before "The Demon of Fornication", a story from fourteenth-century Cyprus under Pierre de Lusignan in which the cynical condemnation of a truth-telling man by the King's counsellors is "the lesser evil". Although *Logbook III* celebrates the place where he can "rest from the sands of the desert" among his own people, the underlying sense of oppression is always there. "The Demon of Fornication" he described as an "exercise", but it has serious import. So too has the "Idyll" in the Kyrenia District, also an "exercise". The two ladies of the British colony betray his ideal conversation: a complete failure to understand or feel anything in the island.

"Homer's world, not ours", as the epigraph from Auden indicates.

"Details of Cyprus" - a poem the title of which bears witness to Seferis's fascination with the history, the antiquities, the dialect of the island - ends with the image of a well-worn groaning when it is moved. "That cry / given out by the ancient sinews of the wood / why did you call it the voice of our country?" As Orfanidis perceptively comments, there is a link here with "the wrinkles of our fathers" in *Mythistorima*. One might also refer to Seferis's admiration of an old Cretan fighter in 1941, "full of wrinkles like an olive-tree". When thinking of Greece he takes heart from "these unknown men" who are "the best thing our country has". Of himself he once wrote: "Essentially I remain always a villager".

Seferis liked to recall the protest of Makriyannis against "guile and deceit". When he criticized British and American policy on Cyprus, uppermost in his mind was its disregard for the wishes of the Cypriot Greeks, a majority of four to one in the population. But he did deplore the "contrivance" as he called it of pretending that the Cypriots were not really Greeks at all. *Enosis* was for him a cultural matter: he had found in Cyprus something precious, a genuine Greek identity; and he wanted its people above all to stay true to themselves in the "union" which really signified - with Hellenic tradition itself.

One of the most impressive poems in *Logbook III*, "Helen", is a story of deceit. Teucer, having been driven out from Salamis by his father for not having saved his half-brother Ajax in the Trojan War, is guided by Apollo to a new Salamis in Cyprus. On his way there he has met Helen in Egypt, who told him that a phantom had taken her place throughout the siege of Troy, as is recorded in the *Helen* of Euripides. The nightingale - pointedly called a *pyliaris* or Cypriot oral poet - allows him no sleep:

Great affliction had fallen upon Greece.
So many bodies thrown
into the jaws of the sea into the jaws of earth:
so many souls
given up to the millstones, like grain.

And all this "for an empty tunic, for a Helen". And the poem expresses the fear that men will fall again for "the ancient deceit of the gods" at some distant time unknown to Teucer.

Here it is Euripides' accusation of the gods that prevails. "Salamis in Cyprus" returns to the Aeschylean view normally held by Seferis. He had always admired *The Persians* for exemplifying to perfection the Greek idea of retribution. "Xerxes, the old myth tells us, was over-come because he showed hubris, because he did an inordinate thing: he flogged the sea. Therefore he found at sea his ruin." The messenger in the play who brings back the news of Xerxes' defeat at Salamis begins his account to Atossa with the words: "There is an island", and this becomes a key phrase in Seferis's poem, which develops into a consideration of human weakness and of the ease with which madness can take over in our affairs. Two voices speak to bring "friends of the other war" to his senses. One belongs to Makriyannis, whose saying is paraphrased that the earth has no handles by which a man can heave it on to his shoulder. The other belongs to a British naval officer killed in the Battle of Crete, who had made up a prayer for his ship's company:

Lord, help us to remember
how this war came about:
the rapacity, deceit, selfishness,
the devaluation of love;
Lord, help us to uproot them . . .

Orfanidis finds in Seferis's poetry "the perspective of a self-awareness and a political maturity" that could save Greece from "catastrophe" upon catastrophe. Seferis elsewhere recorded his fear that those who like Athens the soothingly true to warn Caesar of his peril are always going to be ignored: "Even Aeschylus today is a kind of Artemidorus who has no influence." At the conclusion of "Salamis in Cyprus" two views are contrasted. One maintains that the powerful will not be deterred from their ends: "Who will be listened to?" The other is sure that eventually the messenger will arrive from Salamis. The final affirmation is positive and unflinching: "The voice of this Lord upon the waters. There is an island."

Invitations to bliss

P. N. Furbank

VIRGINIA WOOLF
The Essays of Virginia Woolf
Volume One: 1904-1912
Ed. P. N. Furbank. Hogarth Press. £18.
00128667

It takes one a jolt to find Virginia Woolf, as late as 1909, speaking as if literature were a more or less timeless and settled question, in contrast to the bursting innovativeness of music. "A critic of writing is hardly to be taken by surprise, for we can compare almost every literary form with some earlier form and can measure the achievement by some familiar standard. But who in music has tried to do what Strauss is doing, or Debussy?" Actually, given some inhibition against French writing, one sees how it might then still have been possible to view Stravinsky in this light, though what gives it piquancy is that Woolf had already begun the novel that was to become *The Voyage Out*.

She was writing those remarks for *The Times* in some "Impressions at Bayreuth", and one reflects that this, at least, is how *The Times*, and more relevantly *The Times Literary Supplement*, would certainly have wished to regard literature. But further, one may speculate that the very defects of the "gentlemanly" outlook on literature, the good-mannerliness and impenetrability to ideas which drove Ezra Pound mad, may in an unexpected way have been of aid to Woolf. There are those who regard her *Common Reader* essays, a large proportion of which were written for the *TLS*, as her most enduring achievement; and, whether or not one agrees with this, one can suddenly say that, in a life in which literary success mainly represented agony, this was the part that she really enjoyed. Commissions for a discomfiting sauntering, scholarly biographies and fat volumes of memoirs, intelligent and witty, were an invitation to bliss. "It makes me work with delight - thinking what a number

of wonderful things I shall dig out of it in my article", she wrote to Violet Dickinson, apropos a book on Lady Hester Stanhope. "One gradually sees shapes and thinks oneself in the middle of a world."

It provides much of the pattern, not to say the pathos, of Virginia Woolf's life that she could not freely allow herself to do the things she most valued, and the kind of excitement that most promised ecstasy to her was also the most perilous. It was not only unfettered experiment in fiction that could plunge her into nervous distress; her diary-writing, also, involved her in dangerous emotions - in particular in that savagery and uncharitableness which for the reader can sometimes seem quite chilling and alarming. This may be one reason why this magnificently sharp-eyed observer of humanity (for it is what her diaries continually show her to be) was ready to content herself in her novels with rather insubstantial and conventionalized human material. It was not that human beings did not interest her, for they did so profoundly; it was that she found them oppressive - burr-like, vampirish and a threat to her being.

In not one but several ways, then, *TLS* essay-writing came to her as a salvation. Here at least she could be calmly judicious about character and conduct, as she was well fitted to be; for the dead do not have power to oppress us. Here, furthermore, she could tell herself she was writing in a tradition; never mind if it was a stuffy one, for she could always gently mock it if she felt inclined, and probably no one would notice. The beauty of a tradition was that it was something she could lean her back against; and on a superficial view there is nothing in the prose of these essays that you might not find in Bagehot, if you combined him with Walter Pater. Her own dragonfly skimmings consorted perfectly well with sententious quarterly-reviewer's wit and aspiring art-for-art's sake flights of eloquence. Even the un-receptiveness to ideas acquires a special value

from her purposes; for a flight from "ideas" - and one can hardly remember a single reference to theory, whether philosophical or political or psychoanalytical, in these essays of hers - was actually a facet of her aesthetic modernism and the most radical gesture she had to offer against Victorianism in the shape of Buckle or Leslie Stephen.

She well knew all this for herself. She would fulminate with relish to Violet Dickinson about the monstrous behaviour of literary journals, how they delighted to mangle and tame what she wrote; but it was all good "copy", and the pleasure of outwitting editors was, for her, a keen one. Later in life she conjectured that the ladylike manner acquired with her Victorian upbringing had infected her essays: "I lay the blame for their suavity, their politeness, their sidelong approach, to my tea-table training." But instantly there follows the rider that "On the other hand, this surface manner allows one to say a great many things which would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out."

This splendidly edited volume is the first of six in which all Woolf's known articles are to be reprinted, and it contains some newly discovered pieces as well as very many not previously collected. In his intelligent introduction Andrew McNeillie points out the obvious advantages, for anyone interested in Woolf's development, in arranging the pieces in order of composition. She is a little fumbling just at the beginning, when paying implausible tributes to terrible novels in the pages of a magazine addressed to the high-Anglican clergy. But at least by 1906, in an essay on the Brownings' love-letters, she can be seen to have mastered her method - unmistakably so in these devastating but just words: "The eavesdropper becomes so weary of those emphatic voices, protesting and asseverating, uttering commonplaces with dreadful distortion of the lips and drowning even the simple emotions in a twisted torrent of language."

After the heroic phase

Chris Baldick

DAVID LODGE
The Essays of David Lodge
Occasional essays '65-'85
Ed. P. N. Furbank. Hogarth Press. £12.95.
00128667

Many readers who know David Lodge only from *Small World* or *Changing Places* will be keen to learn upon what basis of fact these pole-trotting academic romances are built. But who misbehaves with whom at which international symposium on what? And how do they find the time without missing each other's seminars? But the inquisitive will find no answers even in the "Personal and Descriptive" section of Lodge's *Write On*. All that is revealed is that the author has less in common with his Morris Zapp than with his more cautious and reticent British character Philip Swallow. Zapp's Euphoric State University derives its name from the hedonistic exhilaration of his creator's first trip to California, but after being shown a paradisaical vision of Abroad it is to the damp, dreary, English midland city of Rummidge/Birmingham that Lodge has to return. As it to display his distance from the glamour of Zappdom, he has published here a photograph of himself lounging in a cardigan in front of a poorly tended privet-hedge. Suspected of structuralist deviations though he may be, who now can damn him as "fashionable"?

Worse things, certainly, can happen to a London boy than to become a Professor of English Literature at a provincial university, but there is still - as Lodge himself implies - an agonising sense of Dantean punishment about a fate which seems to tie him to the favoured territory of the Movement. For although his first success as a novelist owed something both to the example and the encouragement of Movement writers, Lodge's literary inclinations were always at odds with that parochial, even chauvinistic, trend in British letters of the 1950s and 1960s. In criticism, he looked to Continental traditions of formalism and structuralism, while in fiction he ignored the Movement's dogma and held to his admiration for the giants

of Modernism - above all, for Joyce. Lodge's third novel, *The British Museum is Falling Down*, concludes its comedy of Catholics and contraceptives with a daring tribute ("a colossal liberty", as he recalls it) to Molly Bloom's soliloquy; but where Joyce closes *Ulysses* with a triumphant "Yes", Lodge's pastiche ends on a "perhaps". Caught between the irreconcilable literary heroism of Joyce and the more immediately usable, though deflated, register of Kingsley Amis and John Wain, he can - as a



victim of "belatedness" - go out only with a Movement whimper distantly echoing the Modernist bang.

The ironic compromise of "perhaps" embodies the characteristically liberal strategy which Lodge seeks to dilute or qualify certain strong influences on him (Catholicism, Modernism, the energy of American prose), resulting, in criticism, he looked to Continental traditions of formalism and structuralism, while in fiction he ignored the Movement's dogma and held to his admiration for the giants

firmly in place by strictly symmetrical formal structures, and the virtue of restraint governs the essays and reviews in *Write On* too, although at the price of a certain blandness. For example, it would appear from this collection as if the last time Lodge got angry about anything was in 1966, during the dock strike at Southampton; nor is there much here to laugh over either, apart from a send-up of the conventional self-deprecations practised in *The Times Higher Education Supplement's* "Don's Diary" column.

The reason for the sobriety of this volume is that it is composed largely of book reviews, and that Lodge brings to this kind of writing an honourable sense of responsibility, refusing to make malicious fun of other authors. As a reviewer he is diligent (catching the *Oxford American Dictionary* without its rubber or its piece of ass) and self-deprecatingly honest, admitting that he has not read *War and Peace* - a strong bid, this, in his own game of "Humiliation" in *Changing Places*. A believer in informative rather than evaluative reviewing, Lodge knows how to inform clearly; his *Guardian* article for the D. H. Lawrence centenary, for instance, was a model of its kind, although I had not noticed until this re-reading how mischievously it seems to parody the pious formulas of modern hagiography: "A hundred years ago - on 11 September 1885, to be precise - in the small terraced home of a coalminer, in the pit village of Eastwood, Nottingham, a child was born who grew up to become . . ."

Reviewing a much larger collection of reviews by John Updike, Lodge asks what kind of vanity could prompt an author to "dump in the lap of the reading public and on the desks of his fellow reviewers, an unabridged compendium of nearly a decade's fugitive journalism". The justification in his own case, apart from the intrinsic interest of Lodge's essays on Mailer or on the Movement, is that *Write On* is partly a fund-raising exercise in which the royalties will go to a charity for the mentally handicapped. As a book it is not exciting, but as a charity Christmas card it is surely the most distinguished and durable that anyone could send this year.



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Battling bureaucracy

Christopher Frayling

GODFREY RUBENS
William Richard Lethaby: His life and work
1857-1931
320pp. Architectural Press. £30.
085139 3500

"At the moment it is the worst school in England", wrote William Lethaby when he became the first Professor of Ornament and Design at the Royal College of Art in 1900. "I feel a cult, like Livingstone to the heart of darkest Africa. They'll probably try to eat me." In the event, it wasn't the staff or the students at the RCA who consumed his energies, it was the Board of Education: for although Lethaby succeeded in ridding the College of the age-old "South Kensington system" (which was based on the bizarre assumption that the copying of drawings and plaster casts would produce designers for manufacturing industry as well as design teachers for the branch schools), and substituting classes in drawing from nature and craft technique, the Board never provided him with sufficient resources to apply his syllabus to the reality of the studios. The result of a long series of acrimonious exchanges was that the Board of Education "retired" him, and his students had a whip-round for a highly symbolic parting gift - a bicycle.

At one level, Lethaby's entire professional life, following his conversion to the gospel according to William Morris in the mid-1890s, was a succession of battles with bureaucracies - battles which are all documented in great detail throughout this first full-length biography, *William Richard Lethaby* by Godfrey Rubens: with his status-conscious colleagues in the "good and noble profession" of architects; with the RIBA (whose Gold Medal he turned down in 1924, on the honourable grounds that "whoever talks in going along is likely later to find

himself bound up by what he has said" - and Lethaby had *inked*); with "Mr Inkpots" and friends on the London County Council; with the Board of Education ("which narrows the noble man to a withered stick"); and with the civil servants, or architects, who favoured restoration (rather than scholarly conservation) of ancient buildings.

Yet this shy, assertive man was by most accounts a gifted committee member who usually managed, in all three of his discrete careers - as architect, as design teacher and as Surveyor of Westminster Abbey - to have things his own way. As a practising architect (or "housewright"), as he characteristically preferred to call it, from 1879 to 1902, Lethaby made sure that his presence was felt in the London office of his principal, Norman Shaw; he was renowned for his pen-and-ink perspective drawings (apparently done at great speed); and he designed, among many other commissions, two of the most impressive church buildings (All Saints', Brockhampton, which was built, and a ferroconcrete version of Liverpool Cathedral, which was not) in what is currently fashionable to style the "golden age" of English architecture. As a design teacher, from 1896 to 1918, Lethaby helped to found the Central School of Arts and Crafts; became its first principal; turned the School into an experiment in craft education (with support from "actual producers" who lectured part-time) which had significant effects all over Europe, particularly in Austria and Germany; and then attempted to transform the "Arts and Crafts" movement into the "Industrial Design" movement at the Royal College of Art: all these experiences at least helped to clarify his published thoughts (the bibliography lists nearly 300 books, articles, reports, notes and irate letters to *The Times*) about architecture as "the building and bettering of cities", about learning as "practical experiment!", and about the havoc caused by the "literary organizers" and

"academical scholars" who controlled "the vast field of modern education". On this subject, he coined some of his most memorable phrases: "since mail went out of fashion", wrote Lethaby in 1922, education in "the humanities" has become "the defensive armour of a class". As Surveyor of Westminster Abbey, from 1906 to 1927, and as a pioneering member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Lethaby succeeded in applying his ideas on "building dentistry" to the fabric of the Abbey church (and to the Gurduluf tower of Rochester Cathedral).

Lethaby's professional lives - and the books and essays he wrote about them - are of considerable interest in the late 1980s. But Rubens's account, which is careful and well organized and dull, makes them seem very remote from the concerns of today's architects, designers, educators and planners: although the acknowledgements do not say so, this biography (which is full of potentially exciting material) reads like an over-cautious doctoral thesis. Even the illustrations of existing build-

ings look as though they have been taken from the pages of an Edwardian album - which may be charming, but is scarcely an incentive for readers to go out and examine the real thing. Lethaby appears to have changed his mind about a lot of issues (his diffuse thoughts tend to defy Rubens's gallant attempts to impose a rather artificial coherence on them), but he always insisted, from the 1890s onwards, that there was a clear distinction to be drawn (in architecture and in education) between a living tradition and a dead traditionalism: "out of a critical use of past tradition", he wrote, paraphrasing himself, "students must build up a tradition of their own". It is a distinction which appears to have eluded Godfrey Rubens. For, sadly, despite impeccable scholarship and a touching faith in everything Lethaby said or did (the words "an inspiration" often recur in the text), *William Richard Lethaby* unveils in hero as if he were an ancient monument. Just this once, a spot of restoration (rather than conservation) would surely have been permissible.

Strange reward

Patrick O'Connor

KAY DREYFUS (Editor)
The Farthest North of Humanness: Letters of Percy Grainger 1901-14
542pp. Macmillan. £25.
0333 380851

That Percy Grainger's letters were written with eventual publication, or at least availability, in mind is made clear by an unpublished letter quoted by the editor in her introduction: "My letters shall be admired by a yet-unborn generation: can't you see that I always write with an eye to a possible public?" When his relationship with his lover, Karen Holten, was ended by her attachment to her future husband, Grainger wrote, "What will you do with my letters to you? Do not destroy them, if you can in any way refrain."

"How blessed a thing the post is. How could one possibly do without it", Grainger wrote to Rose, his "sweet noble mother", with whom he took up residence in England in 1901; London was their base until 1914, when they left for America. Grainger made several concert tours, returning to Australia, visiting South Africa and spending time in Denmark - it is from these journeys that his long correspondence with his "sweet comrade and little mother" spring. He recounts walks, swims, encores at concerts, joy in the outdoors and physical exercise, and progress in composition. There are a few letters to Grieg (and to Mrs Grieg, who knitted him a scarf), Delius, Plunket Greene and one or two other musical figures, as well as some perceptive accounts of Patti and Melba, whose voice has "the searching, continuous, trance-like vibrations of the middle-distance blues in Australian upcountryscapes". The majority of the other letters, though, are to Karen Holten, "my sweet comforter and firelighter". To her he confides his darker side, his selfishness, his fears. (These he is forced to justify to his mother: "Remember always that tho my mind & heart is babyish & loving & tender & refined my body is rough and wild.")

Grainger's letters to Karen are an intense mixture of fantasy, yearning and attempts to banish self-deception. That much of Grainger's sensual pleasure derived from flagellation seems not to have upset Karen. She urged him not to deny his own happiness and for several years they enjoyed a passionate relationship which is movingly and bewilderingly revealed through Grainger's outpourings.

During the years covered by these letters, Grainger's musical activity was principally that of a concert pianist. The provincial tour he undertook with the soprano Ade Crossley and her company in the spring of 1908, for instance, meant his performing forty-seven times in less than three months. "It is sad to think of that this prime of my life is not being used properly but is only year of slavery." It was in moments snatched on tour, in the summer holidays spent in Denmark, or when beginning his collection of folk songs, that he was able to concentrate upon composition. Grainger saw

himself as having a place in the scheme; his music, he wrote, should "refreshen, rejuvenate...roust up stragglers...not a very deep call but still clean and healthful". He admired Kipling, and Grieg's "glorious creation" which, he wrote to the composer, "catch hold more irresistibly (sic) than for example German art ever could". Grainger retracts this in a letter to Karen Holten: "What a lot of rubbish! I was talking when I said that I didn't love Wagner; on hearing Strauss's *Don Juan*, 'one really sweats with pleasure'." And Schoenberg "is excellent, dear. Hear something of his if you can in any way. He is the greatest revelation I have witnessed. He opens great and rich freedoms for all of us composers." This was written in 1912, and it is worth remembering that much of the repertoire Grainger played in Australia and New Zealand was new music: Busoni, Ravel, Debussy; his enthusiasm for it is one of the positive traits in his writing.

Kay Dreyfus's work on this correspondence - much of which was written in Danish - includes well-researched footnotes for many letters, which fill in the historical detail as well as clarifying the chronology of Grainger's work as a composer. This is essential, for although Grainger writes about his frustrations and about progress on individual pieces, he does not go into detail on the technical side of his work. One could wish that he had had a correspondent to whom he might have written about music with the same enthusiasm that he expresses for his beadwork - he wrote long letters to Rose and Karen about the patterns and skills he was learning from Australian, New Zealand and African crafts. There is a photograph taken by his mother of Grainger wearing a beadwork necklace, grass skirt, belt and armbands. Another, happier, snapshot shows him carrying Karen on his shoulders, she in Danish national costume, he in his walking gear. The frenzied, tortured Grainger who speaks from many of these letters seems at odds with the golden-haired, grinning youth of the photographs. The schoolboy slang and heartiness have a rather exhausting charm which goes some way to lessening the tedium of his obsession with the fine qualities of the mainly Australians and Brits against those of the "Indians, Japs, Shems".

Devotees of Grainger's music, those interested in the finer points of male sexual psychology and researchers into Edwardian social life will find much to engage their attention in these pages. Others may have trouble with Percy Grainger's personality: racist, cruel, self-obsessed, sycophantic. In his own words, To produce clever over-refined sensual wild opel like me there has to be a cultured class living slavishly upon the mass of poverty-stricken ones who are "kept down" largely in order to make possible the overrefinement of the rich out of which my art, my freedom of thought, my chance of strange knowledge & experience, my lights of strange equality & artistic imagination spring & by which they are fostered, I, & folk like me, are the strange reward for all the cruelty & injustice done to the poor and the under-refined.

Strange reward, indeed; this composer, as the Princesse de Polignac described him, "My Messiah out of Cake-Walk".

Behind the strait gates

Richard Shannon

CHRISTOPHER BROOKE
A History of Gonville and Caius College
344pp. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.
£19.50.
085115 4239

"A notable stretch of history lies behind such a curious name." Christopher Brooke, a Fellow of the College (and son of a former Fellow) does more than notable justice to his theme and his opportunities in his splendid *History of Gonville and Caius College*. It is splendid because first of all it makes alive and amply accessible for us a mass of fresh insights into why and how medieval collegiate foundations came into being. Then it is splendid because of the way it weaves centuries of the institutional and intellectual history of a collegiate microcosm of a larger society into a texture which always gives full value to the human element. "A College is a palimpsest in which buildings relatively timeless are marked by many generations of inhabitants, by the memory and presence of its striking personalities." From those inhabitants and in those buildings is one of the richest archives among collegiate foundations. This helps Brooke set new high standards in the genre of institutional history. There is an exceptionally fine set of photographs by Wim Smeets.

Gonville and Caius is the Cambridge college with the oddest name (which matches it well with its Oxford sister, Brasenose). There is also the oddity of the pronunciation of the second half of the name, "Keys". This is not at all a consequence of oddness of pronunciation; it is simply the oddness of an ancient physician from Norwich named John Keys (or Kees) and about ten other variant spellings of that sound) who Latinized his name for scholarly purposes. Dr Caius was the second founder in 1557 of a college or hall dedicated to the Annunciation of Blessed

Mary the Virgin founded originally by a Norfolk parson, Edmund Gonville, in 1348. Gonville's aims were modest: to endow a collegiate foundation, at a time when this was increasingly the trend within both the English universities, to train priests for the Church of sound doctrine and seemly habits. Even though his executor, Bateman, Bishop of Norwich and founder of its neighbour, Trinity Hall, had notions of encouraging more worldly careers in canon and civil law, Gonville Hall remained for over two centuries until the days of King Philip and Queen Mary a small, poor and struggling college. John Caius, previously a scholar and Fellow of Gonville, changed all that. His refoundation and his munificently generous building and endowment set Gonville and Caius on the way to becoming the greatest college in Cambridge not of royal foundation.

As a college, Caius (the Gonville half of the title is used only for formal purposes) is rather unctuously insistent on this last fact. One of the verses of the *Carmen Caianium* goes:

Nobis reges nil dedere;
Nil reginae contulere;
Opibus privati vere
Sumus insitui.

It is also an exceedingly opulent foundation: it is sobering to compute what a parson and a physician and nearly six-and-a-half centuries of endowments and bursarial investment can produce. Otherwise, it is known to those with more than a passing general acquaintance with the ancient universities of England as the college with Oates-Humility, Virtue and Honour - set up by Dr Caius in the earlier years of Elizabeth I to symbolize the undergraduate's progress. The first of these is now a derelict wreck set between the Master's garden and a dark alleyway leading from the Fellows' garage.

But then, as was said of its second founder, this illustrious society has always been more interested in honour than humility. It was the High Victorian architect Alfred Waterhouse

who finally did for the Gate of Humility, sweeping it away and replacing it with his own version in a passageway through the monstrous block he designed for the College on Trinity Street in a coarsely florid French Renaissance style. With this attention-demanding building, Caius, hitherto rather tucked away down what over the centuries had become side-alleys, made its impact on central Cambridge with a vengeance. However, while until recent years Waterhouse's presumption to vie with the Gothic gravity of Great St Mary's and the Palladian serenity of the Senate House has been derided as one of the more notorious instances of Victorian architectural bad manners, the current decline in the credit of *Modernism* and the revival of the Victorian reputations has led to Caius's Waterhouse building becoming one of the more admired objects of respectful attention by coachloads of Victorian Society enthusiasts.

Again, to the generality Caius is known as an East Anglian foundation - until the nineteenth-century reforms none of its Masters was other than a native of the diocese of Norwich - and as having a medical reputation. Dr Caius was himself a royal physician, as was Dr Butts before him. (Shakespeare made Butts play a noble part in *King Henry VIII*; he made, for reasons not well understood, a heavily disguised caricature of Dr Caius one of the buffoons of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.) William Harvey passed beneath the Gate of Humility as a scholar in 1597; the next greatest English physiologist, Charles Sherrington, did so in 1880. There have been more Presidents of the Royal College of Physicians from Caius than from any other university foundation. And it is the only Cambridge college which provides a complete range of undergraduate medical tuition. Yet the medical side of Caius has never been as pervasive as reputation would suggest. Brady, one of the College's greatest Masters, was physician to Charles II and James II; but his real eminence was as the founding genius of anti-Whig historical scholarship. Figures provided in an appendix in this book indicate that since 1886 rather less than a fifth of Caians have trained as physicians or surgeons. This is still a relatively high proportion, but what it gives is a flavour rather than a character.

How then is such a foundation to be characterized? Not, alas, as one of Cambridge's nurseries of poetry. Possibly the strait passages of Humility, Virtue and Honour are inimical to the genius of letters. Shadwell is not a name that exactly resonates. Nor has it been conspicuously a bastion of the Church, for all that it can boast the names of Lyndwood, Jeremy Taylor and Cosin. (There is a certain perverse affection for Titus Oates.) It was an early seminary of the Reformation when the going was hard; but it was a royalist foundation when the purer houses were producing their Miltons and Cromwells. Caius otherwise produced more or less standard quotas of bishops and judges and public men and men of science and intellect. John Venn, its first comprehensive historian, estimated in 1900 that about 3 per cent of its members identifiable since 1348 attained to "DNB standard". It is difficult, given the paucity of records in comparable foundations, to know what to make of this estimate. In all probability it is close to a general Oxbridge average. Certainly it underlines the fact that the vast majority of the "generations of inhabitants" who passed through the gates of Caius were unsung and unhonoured. Until the late sixteenth century the narrowness of its resources and until the late nineteenth century the narrowness of its major recruiting catchment meant that the earlier epoch of Caius's general and high reputation - broadly from the later sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries - had to correspond with a period when East Anglia still held its place as a great component of the nation. Released from both these constraints, Caius has flourished in this century far beyond all its own earlier examples. This distinguished book will serve as the token of that achievement and that promise.

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All of life was here

E. S. Turner

STEPHEN WINKWORTH
Room Two More Guns: The intriguing history of the Personal Column of "The Times"
263pp. Allen and Unwin. £10.95.
004 8080551

The newspaper personal column was the first "agony column", a description now irreversibly transferred to the love-knots-united department. It is true that little of the fustian anguish ("Bleat, Watson, unmitigated bleat!") that once marked the personal columns survives. Cryptic intimate messages are out of fashion, save in the orgies of "yuppy" Valentines for which all newspapers compete; and the more bare-faced solicitations appear either in specialized weeklies or in those American literary reviews whose academic readers have no wish to sleep alone on their sabbaticals.

Stephen Winkworth, the latest investigator of *The Times's* personal column, is described as the inventor of a radio-controlled shark for millionaires' beaches and a flying 15-foot pterodactyl for films; appropriately he advertised the latter in the personal column, which in its day has attracted inventors of inflammable air, portable water-closets, infallible anti-aircraft weapons, a furometer and a finger stiffener (in "elastic gold") for the "tremulous" writer. He is fully at ease amid dotiness, knows a thing or two about code-breaking and can detect lewdness under three coats of disguise.

The title *Room Two More Guns* refers to the 1932 recruiting advertisement for an expedition to the Matto Grosso in search of Colonel Fawcett. It hooked Peter Fleming and the result was *Brazilian Adventure*. Another spin-off may or may not have been Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*.

In the preceding century an explorer who

put his faith in the column was Captain Sir Richard Collinson, who set off to look for the missing Sir John Franklin in North-West Canada. Determined to keep up with news of his family, and of his rivals, in a wilderness devoid of postal services, Collinson argued that the channels of trade were so diffusive that one could be pretty sure of finding *The Times* somewhere and arranged for coded messages to be inserted (code was necessary to keep his plans secret). Disappointingly, the newspaper failed to reach him when his ship was trapped for three years in an icefield.

The column's *animus mirabilis* was 1870, when it was engulfed by an exchange of messages, in French, between dwellers in besieged Paris and their relatives and friends on safe soil. Copies of the front page, photographically reduced on to flimsy paper the size of a bus ticket, were sent to Bordeaux for transmission by pigeon across the German lines to Paris, where they were enlarged by magic lantern. Messengers were then sent to the addresses listed.

Early contemporaries of *The Times* accepted advertisements from young sparks offering to provide heirs for tired old gentlemen, or by old sparks anxious to pass on their mistresses. By mid-Victorian times this saucy traffic had been reduced to intrigues between lovers, often in code. Cracking such codes in *The Times* occupied the leisure of those who, today, would have turned to the crossword. Among them, we learn, were the mathematician Charles Babbage and the scientist Sir Charles Wheatstone, who were not above playing the "marplot" by inserting their own advertisements in the same code, precipitating a flurry of "All is discovered". Sometimes a parent, suspecting a domestic intrigue, would turn suspicious eyes on the personal column at the breakfast table.

The author devotes many pages to the bizarre advertisements (some 400 over twenty

years) by the ex-Customs man E. Wilson, "a great self-dramatist who liked the idea of his grandiose schemes and private tragedies being played out in public", but even the most dedicated readers must have lost patience with his farrago of symbols, pseudonyms and polyglot-tal tags.

Perennial features of the column, apart from lovers' assignments, have been "come home" appeals ("Would Philip like to hear of his mother's death?"), offers by public schoolboys to go anywhere and do anything (ideally on a motorcycle), expressions of thanks to St Jude, proposals to change surnames like Bug or Wilde, apologies for literary malfeasance, appeals to the better nature of burglars and impudent requests for loans (as by an Oxford graduate who has "stupidly lost all his money" and would hate "to leave the Riviera this winter"). Winkworth does not mention all those respectable young women offering a good breast of milk, or the acknowledgements of conscience money by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (now rare).

Did enemy agents use the column in wartime? Seemingly not, though the German Consul-General (Robert Graves's uncle) took space on August 3, 1914, to urge his countrymen to return home, "without delay, as best

they can". Thereafter the column contained much "conchie"-bashing. After 1918 a certain laxity crept in; chum could be heard calling to chum and the management seemed insufficiently *au fait* with the language of vice (the *New York Herald*, circa 1900, used to run page after page of scandalous "personals"). But it was not all decay. Saloon-bar moralists took space to rebuke selfish motorists, golf-course cads and loud talkers in the theatre, often specifying time and place. By the mid-1920s the author suspects the column may have been occasionally primed by office-written entries, a ploy not unknown on other newspapers trying to work up a personal column.

Room Two More Guns is a most agreeable book for browsing, with grist for the social historian, the psychiatrist, the Holmesian and the lover of plain useless knowledge. Is the author sure that in 1963 the column carried "the only proposal of marriage in the 181 years of its existence on the newspaper's first page"? Has he double-checked? By the way, it was not the Duke of Portland who put the advertisement in the *General Advertiser* in 1749 urging people into the Haymarket Theatre to see a man climb into a wine bottle (causing a notable riot); it was the second Duke of Montagu, a leading buffoon of the day.

Stop/go press

Pat Rogers

JAMES SUTHERLAND
The Restoration Newspaper and Its Development
262pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521 326133

Like all the books which James Sutherland has written in his distinguished career, the present volume contains much solid fact and a variety of interesting ideas. If it falls a little short of the publisher's claims ("a major survey... comprehensive approach"), then that has to do in part with the paucity of evidence on some crucial issues, as well as the uneven course of the early newspaper. However, there are some awkward features in the manner of the study's organization, and the overall effect is not equal to the sum of individual parts. Historians of the press will want to consult the work for reference—much of the material is more compactly assembled than in any other place, and there is some new evidence from public archives.

There are six chapters, dealing in turn with "origins and developments"; then London, country and foreign news; politics; and the newspapermen and women. The first section is inevitably somewhat jumpy, for the author is obliged to construct a narrative out of the confused stop/go which characterized the press between 1660 and the 1730s. The lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 comes half-way in the story, though it is in many respects the crucial datum. Sutherland begins with the era of Henry Muddiman and Roger L'Estrange, at the juncture of the Restoration proper. His next main stopping-place is the burst of journalistic freedom which took place during the chaos of the Exclusion Crisis. It is here, in the notebooks of men like Benjamin Harris and Nathaniel Thompson, that the true subject of the book lies. But, as we are reminded in slightly iterative apologetic formulas, the frenzy of journalistic activity was too brief for a settled pattern to emerge. As a result, later phases of the history have to be enlisted for any generalization or deduction to be made, and indeed much of the text is devoted to the press as it evolved more fully in the new century. Much of this discussion relates to the reign of George I, and a good deal actually strays into the reign of his successor. This may well be impossible to avoid if a coherent picture is to be drawn, but it does make for a disturbing shift in the centre of gravity of a monograph nominally devoted to the Restoration newspaper.

The topical arrangement of the chapters indicates that the study's primary emphasis on the journals' content rather than on, for example, their propagandistic or rhetorical message. It is a relief to be spared the routine semiological gestures of so much current criticism. At the same time, the reliance of the central chapters on anecdote and news "stories" does bring with it a certain lack of intellectual focus. Sutherland makes clear the difficulties under which journalists laboured, with uncertain postal arrangements, unpredictable packet-boat arrivals and cumbersome printing added to harassment by authorities. So it is not so much the news that was fit to print that the historian finds as the news that could be got together by the hour when the newspaper hit the street. Entertaining but sometimes inconsequential items crowd the pages, and so the chapter on town news contains extensive coverage of bizarre murders—some political, like that of Thomas Thynne, others just the mindless slaughters common to any age. From the country we get strange relations of ghostly apparitions and wrecks stranded on the seashore. The chapter on foreign news virtually ignores the Restoration as such, and describes instead the practice of news-gathering as it took shape in the eighteenth century. There is a brief suggestion that pigeons may have been used to carry mail, but stockjobbers seem to have seen the possibilities of speed here more clearly than the journalistic profession.

The two concluding chapters illustrate the methods of this book at their least and their most effective. A section entitled "Politics" is disappointingly confined to the political stories that made the front page (to use an anachronistic term). We are given quite full accounts of certain episodes in the Exclusion Crisis, scandalous events surrounding the Popish Plot, and other topical tales which the press considered newsworthy. But there is very little sense of an enveloping climate of opinion, little interest in the pressure of political activity outside the journalistic context, and altogether not much concern for what might be termed the ideology of popular journalism. "Politics" is in fact constructed in a somewhat old-fashioned sense as affairs of state; atomistic events—state trials, debates, loyal addresses—rather than as a sounding-board of clashing interests and groups. Much more successful is the final chapter on the people who ran the early newspapers. Here Sutherland brings together much valuable information on figures such as Harris, Thompson, Langley, Curtis and Francis Smith, who (along with their feisty women folk) brought the infant newspaper into vigorous, if spasmodic, life.

The Restoration Newspaper and Its Development will be useful to those interested in the personnel and structure of the early press, and to those who wish to know what sort of stories got into print. It does not address larger questions about the nature of the press—its political and cultural contribution to the national discourse. Others may wish to pursue the story in a different intellectual framework, but they will be grateful for the ground which this book has cleared.

Pressed and protected

Roger Morriss

N. A. M. RODGER
The Wooden World: An anatomy of the Georgian navy
455pp. Collins. £17.50.
0002165481

The popular image of the Royal Navy in the mid-eighteenth century is still one of rum, the press-gang, the lash, oppressive overcrowding and confinement. In N. A. M. Rodger's view this accords little with reality and in *The Wooden World* he sets out to dispel many well-cherished myths. Ranging in detail across the features of shipboard life, victualling, health, training, discipline and the careers of ratings and officers, he provides a comprehensive survey of naval society at the time of the Seven Years War.

Two arguments run throughout the book: the first, that seamen were better off in the navy than they would have been elsewhere. Compared with those of merchant ships, manning ratios were lower, and life, except in the smallest warships, was more spacious and comfortable. By standards ashore, naval provisions were plentiful, nutritious and regular; spoiled victuals comprised only 1 per cent of the whole, while pursers' frauds were less common than tradition has it, because of the readiness of crews to complain. With seafaring skills in high demand in wartime, life was preserved, not squandered. Scurvy was countered during the Seven Years War by the use of fresh vegetables, hospitals were built, and to preserve

mental health—contrary to popular impression—regular leave ashore was permitted, even at the cost of desertions. With most ratings being under twenty-five, the sex life of crews was not neglected either. With the large warships in port during much of their commission, the greater part of crews could have "wives" aboard, reducing sodomy to an insignificant problem. Up to a fifth might need treatment for venereal disease, but with catastrophic loss of life from fevers in the tropics exceptional, there was still reason to believe that health in the navy was better than in communities of comparable size on shore. Possibly realizing the benefits of naval life, pressed seamen often quickly adapted to it. Stable crews became contented ones, desertion most affecting smaller companies broken up or "turned over" to other ships. Even physical violence was moderated by what appears to have been a conscious attempt by officers to keep down levels of punishment. And mutiny—like strikes, usually conforming to customary rules and patterns until appeals were investigated—was a natural resort against abuse.

Rodger's second argument is that officers were appointed primarily for their ability and integrity and did not on the whole disappoint their principals. First Lords and commanders-in-chief could not escape their political environment, influence and obligations, yet, though Rodney was a notorious exception, they consistently put the needs of the navy first. In considering recommendations they took capacity for character assessment into account, while Anson and Hawke at the Admiralty jealously guarded their powers of



The lower deck of a ship in port, circa 1800; the sailors have their sea chests up from below and their "wives" on board. The sketch is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

appointment, confirmation or veto against all comers. The result was an officer corps which, with relatively contented and co-operative crews, was fully capable of achieving the victories of the Seven Years' War.

Both these arguments provide valuable correctives to many traditional ideas. But in arguing the case for the Admiralty, Rodger seems on occasion too favourable to the navy: in generalizing, for example, about the role of a basic humanity in moderating the level of punishments, and in ignoring intimidation as a factor in persuading pressed men to reconcile themselves to their lot. In relying primarily on the views of sea officers, he also underplays the views that contemporaries had of the navy, and seamen themselves of their lives. He examines ratings' careers in terms of the organization to which they were subject and leads one to assume that there were no cultural differences between men of the lower deck and officers aspiring to gentility, and that the expectations of the two groups were similar. In

his conclusion Rodger emphasizes the similarity of social relations in the navy to life on shore, where "vertical bonds of patronage and protection were still far stronger and more important than the nascent interests of class". Such vertical bonds, he suggests, had their value in permitting the navy to win battles through paternalistic leadership rather than by subjecting crews to cruelty, tyranny and oppression. A suspicion none the less remains that the view from the lower deck may have been very different.

Rodger has produced a highly stimulating and provocative book. He has used Admiralty in-letters, courts martial records, muster and pay-books, as well as private papers, and employed sampling techniques and statistics on a scale hitherto unprecedented. Elegantly written, containing a wealth of fascinating information (including almost a hundred pages of tables, notes, bibliography, glossary and index), it will certainly remain a standard work of reference for many years to come.

A surgeon turned scourge

Christina Bewley

G. V. C. YOUNG and CAROLINE FOSTER
Captain François Thurot
259pp. Peel: Mansk-Svenska. £9.95.
0907715230

François Thurot had a brief but remarkable career. Born in 1727 at Dijon of middle-class parents, he was apprenticed to a surgeon, and made his way to Calais, where he joined a privateer as ship's surgeon. After his capture by the British and a year as a prisoner at Dover, Thurot escaped, aged eighteen, in a small boat, and yet spent much of his time until 1753 either in London, where he appears to have been engaged in spying for the French, or in smuggling and possibly piracy. In 1750 he married an Irishwoman, Henrietta Smith. During the Seven Years War, Thurot reverted to privateering. Appointed a Captain in the French navy, he captured sixteen British ships. When promoted to command a squadron of two frigates and two corvettes, he embarked on highly successful privateering activities, captured many prizes, harassed the coast of England and Scotland and became "the scourge and terror of the North Seas". Admired by the British as well as the French for his courage and patriotism, he acquired a reputation as a resourceful and amiable adventurer who treated his crew and prisoners with fairness and courtesy.

In 1759 Thurot was summoned to Versailles, where Madame de Pompadour took him up (she later obtained a pension for his widow). He was given charge of a squadron of five frigates which were intended to land on the coast of Ireland while the main French fleet sailed from Brest. The squadron carried about 1,300 troops under the command of Brigadier de Flober. He and his aristocratic fellow officers resented having to take orders from the plebeian Thurot. Thurot succeeded in leaving Dunkirk in spite of a British blockade, but was forced by contrary winds to go as far as the Faroes to obtain vital supplies, and only then sailed for Ireland. Discouraged by lack of food and by bad weather, the army officers wanted to return to France. One frigate slipped away; Flober ordered the guard to seize Thurot, but he stood firm, maintained his command and

sailed to Islay, where it was learnt that Hawke had defeated the French fleet. Undeterred, Thurot captured Carrickfergus, then crossed to the Isle of Man, where on February 28, 1760, he was engaged by a British squadron. The other French ships did little to support Thurot, who fought on alone until mortally wounded. His men threw his body overboard before surrendering; it was washed up at Kirkcubright in Wigtownshire, and Thurot is buried there.

Captain François Thurot by G. V. C. Young and Caroline Foster has been published in the Isle of Man, where the bowsprit and two guns from Thurot's ship form a monument to that battle. Thurot is also commemorated in an old Manx ballad. The chief sources for his biography are a French life, published in 1791, and John Knox Laughton's *Studies in Naval History* (1970). Although Mr Young does not agree with all Professor Laughton's conclusions, he presents the facts fairly and has a pleasant, lucid style. He has translated Scandinavian documents and Mrs Foster has unearthed interesting comments on Thurot by Smollett and by John Wesley. Their text, though chronological, is not a straightforward narrative, but jumps from one episode and document to another, making it difficult to grasp the salient facts. There is, for instance, no personal description of Thurot until page 106. Extraneous material which is not entirely relevant adds to the confusion. On the other hand the Bishop of Sodor and Man's remark, after Thurot's death, that "once again we can sit down unmolested to our herrings and potatoes", is relegated to an appendix. The first chapter, on the historical background, which could be helpful to some readers, is marred by judgments which are disputable. Lord Ferrers is misprinted as Ferners, and in a genealogical table George II appears as the son of his aunt Sophia Charlotte rather than of George I. More important, no vivid picture of Thurot's personality, fame, daring or ability emerges from the detailed accounts of storm-ridden voyages, nor is there any description of the skill and cunning he must have used to evade customs officers and the British navy. The book is unlikely to appeal to readers who have no particular or local interest in Thurot; it could, however, be of considerable use as a specialist source.

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From the Maghrib to the Maldives

Robert Irwin

ROSS E. DUNN
The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim traveller of the fourteenth century
357pp. Croom Helm. £22.50.
0709908113

In 1325, at the age of twenty-one, Ibn Battuta set off from his native Tangier on the *hajj* to Mecca. He did not return to Morocco until 1349, by which time he had visited not only Mecca, but also Egypt, Syria, Persia, Iraq, East Africa, the Yemen, Anatolia, the steppes of southern Russia, Constantinople, India, the Maldives, Sumatra and China, and when he did return it was not long before he set off again for Spain and then for Mali. He died in 1368 or 1369. The lengthy narrative of his travels was shaped and put into literary form by a contemporary, Ibn Juzayy (the Hakluyt Society's translation is still in progress).

In the course of his travels Ibn Battuta suffered shipwreck and despoliation by brigands. He acquired and lost fortunes, wives and concubines. He gambled for political power in India and the Maldives and received mystical instruction from Sufi *fakis* in Egypt, India and China.

The background to his narrative is the slow systole and diastole of life in the Islamic world (a semi-arid zone from the Atlantic to the China Sea which is still expanding): the months of pilgrimage and fasting through the seasons of the solar year; the courses of the monsoon winds and of the trading ships that travelled before them; the migration of transhumant

pastoralists from summer to winter camps; the regular passage of the Kurdish horse-drovers from the Crimea to Peshawar and of salt caravans from the heart of the Sahara to the River Niger. Ibn Battuta saw empires rise and fall and described Muslim societies on the turn before the coming of the Black Death.

Surely it was youth and lust for adventure that took him off on these extraordinary travels? Surely the middle-aged man who returned to the Maghrib was different from the young man who had set off over twenty years before? The prosaic and self-effacing Ibn Battuta offers us nothing to confirm such guesses. The ageing Ibn Battuta, shocked by the freedom of the sexes in Mali, seems the same as the middle-aged Ibn Battuta who clucked away about how women on the Maldives do not cover their breasts; and neither seems different from the young and rather prim Ibn Battuta who rebuked the keeper of the *hammam* in Minya, Upper Egypt, for allowing its clients to walk about with no towels draped around their middle. If Ibn Battuta had ever been a goliard or scholar gypsy at heart, then the conventions of Islamic travel literature allowed or required him to conceal it.

He seems to have had little or no interest in the Valley of Diamonds or the lands of the Amazons and Cynocephali. Rather he travelled to see more of what he had already seen, and since he rarely ventured beyond the territories governed by Islamic empires (even in southern India and China, he was still able to move from one Muslim merchant community to another) he found more of that sameness – the same holy text, the same liturgical language, the same educational system, the same judicial hierarchy, and more or less the same

canons of literary taste and social etiquette.

This sameness of the Muslim world – every large town with its qadi, market inspector, Sufi shaykh, mamluke garrison, mosque, teaching college and caravanserai – must have been reinforced in Ibn Battuta's experience by the extraordinary, coincidental encounters he had on his travels. Trying to reach the Black Sea across the Pontic Mountains in mid-winter, his party found themselves lost and in danger of dying; a former Arab acquaintance of Ibn Battuta's lodging at a Sufi hospice in a nearby Turkish village got them out of their difficulties. He met the religious scholar, al-Bushri, in the Chinese port of Qanjanfu; later he met al-Bushri's brother in Sijilmasa on the edge of the Sahara. Underpinning this cross-crossing of tracks were charitable networks of hospitality offered by the Sufi brotherhoods and by the *Funuwwa* lodges, as well as the less formalized bonds of fraternity which bound Muslim scholars and merchants to one another across the world.

Travel for the religious scholar could be good business. Ibn Battuta began his journeying as a scholar of Islamic law and ended up holding profitable judgeships in widely dispersed parts of the world. He also learnt how to operate the gift relationship, of which Ross E. Dunn gives an admirable description. A little gift from the visitor or client seeking patronage

to the ruler secures a bigger gift in return, and the client has not even enough resources for that pump-priming first gift, then a money-lender may well be persuaded to put up the initial capital.

Professor Dunn's book is neither a popularization of Ibn Battuta's travel narrative, nor a scholarly dissection of it. It has elements of both but is more interesting than either. Instead he has used Ibn Battuta as a tracking eye, as a pretext for explaining how the Muslim world worked in the early fourteenth century.

It is extremely well done. Dunn is a gifted expositor and his book tells us how ships were built and navigated, how scholars secured their credentials and transmitted their expertise, how the Muslim faith continued to spread in the wake of Arab trade and many other things besides. He explains why some dynasties were due to grow and grow (like the Ottoman) while others fell to pieces (like the Mongol Ilkhanate in Iran). *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta* is an excellent synoptic introduction to the Muslim world in the Middle Ages. Dunn has read widely and his notes will encourage others to do the same. Although he perhaps errs in his generosity to Ibn Battuta and his amanuensis Ibn Juzayy, he is careful to give weight in the text and the notes to the very large number of occasions when Ibn Battuta's truthfulness or at least accuracy seems to be in doubt.

East-West communication

Jasper Rees

NIGEL AND ADAM NICOLSON
Two Roads to Dodge City
304pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
029778964

Earlier this year Nigel and Adam Nicolson, father and son, decided to write a book together by corresponding with each other as they separately explored the North American continent. They proposed, too, to investigate what is rather loftily referred to as the "Father-Son Relationship". As they embark on a Pickwickian cataloguing of the quirks of the landscape, they attempt through their letters to come to terms with how Eton, Cambridge and a burdensomely famous family (Nigel's parents were Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West) had educated them in the upper-class malaise of being emotionally *incommunicado*.

The choice of continent is fortuitous. On the other side of the Atlantic they discover a means of expressing themselves which they know to be part and parcel of the new landscape – something which cannot be packed up and air-freighted back to Sissinghurst, the family home. Covering new ground geographically, they hazard upon a new-found land of unembarrassed self-expression which is facilitated – ironically – not by the distance they have travelled away from home but by the distance they have put between each other; as

Adam covers the West coast, and Nigel takes on the East. They acknowledge that when they meet in Dodge City after three months of open-hearted scribbling, on such off-limits subjects as Nigel's divorce, their ineffectual English reserve will resurface.

However, *Two Roads to Dodge City* is most interesting not as an exploratory dialogue but as a pair of self-searching dramatic monologues. Unable to stop himself from stalking old acquaintances for private five-star accommodation, occasionally lecturing on Virginia Woolf when he passes through a distinguished university, doltily quoting Wordsworth to himself during a particularly serene and solitary communion with nature, Nigel fails to elude the uncomfortable stereotype of old English gentleman pinned to him in foreign parts. His is an urbane progress dramatically different from his son's cultural odyssey in California and the epic landscape of the mid-West. Adam's letters are a chronicle of a burgeoning literary talent exposing itself to new sights and sounds and shedding the outer layer of what one bemused Californian calls his "negative attitude problem", that peculiarly English ailment. His accounts of attending a football basketball match, a Playboy party given by Hugh Hefner, and a demonstration against aid to the Contras are funny and sharp.

Two Roads to Dodge City is an eloquent, slightly gushing, testimony that the generation gap remains as wide as the Grand Canyon.

Walking out from Batworthy Farm

We stood in the centre of the stone circle
conjuring up a wedding (not ours)
and other rituals. We imagined the difficulties
of transporting the priest – gasped at the state

of the guests' hair, the hatless beat man.
And before the groom could say 'I do' –
the bridal veil blew halfway across the moor.
The sacrifice of holding a wedding

In such a circle! Yet, Sunday couples
struggle happily over moorland hand in hand,
making their weekly pilgrimage, some with canes,
others shouldering back-packs, to witness what?

The sky, perhaps; a stream; the distant Tor?
These found stones; a congregation of sheep?

ALICE KAVOUNAS

Taking to the hills

John Ure

MARY RUSSELL
The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women travellers and their world
239pp. Collins. £12.95.
0002174146

This is a deceptive book: the subtitle – *Women travellers and their world* – and the charming jacket illustration of an eighteenth-century English lady being carried by tonjon in India, suggest that it will be devoted to the journeys of enterprising ladies in remote or exotic parts of the globe. The reader is encouraged to think he is returning to the world of Lesley Blanch's *The Wilder Shores of Love*. In fact, Mary Russell's brief is much wider: her book covers the adventures of women in many fields that are not strictly travel at all – aviation, mountaineering and sailing, among others.

With such a broad canvas, the treatment is inevitably rather thin. Few ladies rate more than a paragraph or two at most in the author's breathless résumé of so much female endeavour in so many fields, over so many centuries and in so many countries. One would like to read more about fewer, rather than so little about so many. Nor, beyond the mere fact of gender, is there much in common between the subjects of her paragraphs; it is surely straining at her theme to pass within three pages from the piratical activities of Mary Read and Anne Bonny in the early eighteenth century to the epic transatlantic voyage of Ann Davison in 1953.

Miss Russell seems aware of the thinness of the connecting theme and tries, in an opening chapter, to find some common motivation for her daring ladies. But by the time she has enumerated the wanderlust, love-sickness, mate-hunting, independence-seeking, intellectual curiosity and sheer bravado of her disparate bunch of subjects, the reader is forced to the conclusion that there is really no common factor – or at least no factor more common than (or very different from) that which would be found among an equally wide sample of male travellers. Women, like men, appear to take to the hills, the sea, the sky or the desert for every reason under the sun.

But whatever the structural shortcomings, this book is a vehicle for some very entertaining stories about some very remarkable peo-

ple. The juxtaposition of modesty and danger is nicely illustrated, by the Alpine exploits of Mrs Fred Burnay who found that, in 1880, while it was sartorially unacceptable to set off up Mont Blanc in breeches rather than a skirt, she could wear the former under the latter and shed the latter once she was sufficiently far above the tree line to avoid offending male susceptibilities; she consequently hid her skirt under a handy boulder, only to find – on her descent – that skirt and boulder had been carried away together by an avalanche. But even such stalwart endeavours to achieve modesty did not stop her great-aunt, Lady Bentinck, sending a frantic message to her mother saying: "Stop her climbing mountains; she is scandalizing all London and looks like a Red Indian."

Not all the tales are of such respectable ladies as Mrs Burnaby. Eliza Craven had had a spectacular divorce before setting off by carriage for Constantinople in 1785, with such essential equipment as a side-saddle, a harp and a tea-kettle. Going on to the Crimea, Moscow and St Petersburg she wrote wistfully to the Margrave of Brandenburg, whose *belle amie* she was, that she "hated travelling". This being so, one would have liked to have heard more of what compelled her to cover so much ground with such disarming impedimenta; but – as so often – our curiosity is left aroused but unsatisfied.

There is a strong vein of feminism running through Russell's commentary on the exploits of her ladies, which seems to inspire indignation and clichés in equal measure. Dr Livingstone's long-suffering wife is described as

forged on the anvil of wifely-devotion, a life-convict branded by both her womanhood and by Christianity, and made to travel through what was undoubtedly, for her, a vale of tears.

The side-swipe at Christianity is echoed elsewhere in disabbling remarks about missionaries who "felt themselves called upon to bring the word of God to the heathen". Unwary the natives may have been, but it is surely doubtful if that quality was part of the perceived calling of the missionaries.

But one should not carp. If Mary Russell had not been feeling militant about the heroic exploits of her sex she might not have assembled this impressive compendium of female achievement. And that would have been a pity, as this is an absorbing account full of engaging incidents, crisply related. It is a bedside book that will be equally in demand on the male side of the double-bed.

The cleaner view

Charles Hope

MASSIMO GIACOMETTI (Editor)
The Sistine Chapel: Michelangelo rediscovered
274pp. Muller, Blond and White. £40.
034111401

This book would be welcome for its illustrations alone, which provide by far the most complete visual record of the painted decoration of the Sistine Chapel now available, in excellent colour and at a bargain price. Virtually everything is reproduced, including even views of the interior of the Chapel with the Raphael tapestries installed on the side walls. Most important of all, there are reproductions of all Michelangelo's lunettes of the Ancestors of Christ after their recent restoration. But it offers much more than Takashi Okamura's splendid illustrations. The text consists of a series of informative studies by leading authorities, which together give a comprehensive and accessible account of the present state of knowledge about the Chapel and the paintings it contains. They will be required reading for specialists, but most will also be of more general interest.

The current campaign of restoration of the ceiling has already transformed our understanding of Michelangelo as a painter. The cleaning of the lunettes has not merely revealed a whole series of major paintings which were hitherto virtually invisible, but has also shown him to be a brilliant and very distinctive artist, whose importance in this respect for the early Florentine mannerists has never before been fully appreciated. Although the vault itself is less dirty, early results of the cleaning of this section (which are not reproduced in this book) suggest that here too the appearance of perhaps the most famous masterpiece of Italian painting will be profoundly altered, and

equally dramatic changes may be expected when the restorers reach the "Last Judgment". In recent months the cleaning campaign has provoked some criticism, particularly in Italy.



One of Michelangelo's ignudi from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. It is reproduced here from Harvard University Press's recent paperback reprint of S. J. Freedberg's *Circa 1600: A revolution of style in Italian painting* (114pp. £10.50. 0 674 13157 6).

There are those who complain that dirty, as it is, the ceiling as we are accustomed to see it is such a central element in our visual culture that we should not tamper with it. Better the frescos we know than the ones Michelangelo painted.

Uses of the antique

Bruce Boucher

SAVATORE SETTIS
Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana
Volume One, L'uso dei classici
477pp. £30.00.
006057847
Volume Two, I generi e i temi ritrovati
400pp. £35.00.
006578510
Title: Einaudi.

Einaudi has become the dominant Italian publisher for serious and ambitious ventures in the history of art. Their recent *Storia dell'arte italiana* surveyed the range of Italian art within a thematic framework encompassing fashion, issues like methodology, technology, and minor centres of artistic production. However debatable the results, the project was undeniably interesting and succeeded in presenting familiar material in a new light. Now the *Storia* has spawned a successor in the shape of a three-volume project dedicated to the presence and recreation of the antique in Italian art. Like its predecessor, the new series, *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, examines case studies under three headings which form the titles of individual volumes: the use of the classics, genres and rediscovered themes, and from tradition to archaeology. Now that two volumes have appeared, the quality and coherence of the plan can be assessed, and it proves a worthy continuation of the earlier project.

A native Calabrian, Salvatore Settis, the editor of *Memoria dell'antico*, grew up with the variety of several civilizations as part of everyday life, and his academic pursuits have moved from archaeology to encompass art history and the reinterpretation of antiquity in later times. Several of the essays in these volumes have been inspired by Settis's seminars at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, where the interplay between archaeology and art history is a binding element. The concept of the afterlife of the antique has not been ignored by students of cultural history, nor is the purpose behind these three volumes simply to pinpoint the re-

vival of arts and letters under Frederick II or Sixtus IV. The intention is rather to examine the political uses to which the antique was subjected by later generations, to explain the loss of its original meaning and the various interpretations to which ancient art was subject, and to highlight the attempts to reconcile the impulses to destroy and conserve antique buildings and statues.

The first volume, *L'uso dei classici*, appeared in 1984 and centres on the image of Rome as a political and cultural phenomenon with which later cultures came to terms. Several of the articles display a refreshing originality, and the general standard is high. There are excellent articles on the reinterpretation of Rome and its monuments by Chiara Frugoni and Massimo Miglio, an imaginative study of Renaissance collections of antiquities by Claudio Franzoni, and an unexpected but rewarding account of Petrarch and the visual arts from Maurizio Bettini. Giovanni Agosti and Vincenzo Farinella contribute a brilliant essay on one monument, Trajan's column. They demonstrate that the reliefs from the column were more widely studied than previously thought, and their discussion of copies after the reliefs has opened up a rich vein for further exploration.

The second volume, *I generi e i temi ritrovati*, maintains the level of scholarship found in its predecessor. It contains one article of great originality and thoughtfulness by Nikolaus Himmelmann on nudity in art as a Renaissance and Neoclassical ideal. This is a wide-ranging survey of the uses of nudity from antiquity to the age of Canova, and disputes the generally accepted notion that its reappearance in Renaissance art was directly inspired by classical sculpture. Instead, Himmelmann by classical sculpture. Instead, Himmelmann traces the proliferation of nude depictions of gods and allegorical figures back to medieval, particularly fourteenth-century, sources. There one finds the beginnings of the association of nudity with the pagan world as well as the presentation of scenes like the Judgment of Paris with nude goddesses, whereas on classical sarcophagi the goddesses were always shown clothed. By widening the scope for nudity, medieval artists created the basis for its elevation to an ideal by later artists like Signorelli

and Michelangelo and by theoreticians such as Vasari and Winckelmann. The remaining essays range in quality from excellent to worthy. The mixture of nationalities and disciplines does not always make for a smooth blend: archaeologists tend to be less familiar with the art-historical aspects of their topics, and vice versa. Italian scholars rely more on Italian sources, Germans on German, with the Dutch and English combining sources in several languages. Inevitably as this may be, it occasionally has drawbacks. For example, Klaus Fittschen's account of antique portraiture would have been more focused if he had been aware of Irving Lavin's articles on the same subject. Fittschen and Eberhard Paul take diametrically opposed views of the question of falsification of antique busts without specifically addressing each other's objections. In spite of this, both scholars provide helpful surveys of their subjects, and Paul's inquiry into the nature of faking or completing antique sculpture raises just the sort of issues that both archaeologists and art-historians must address if clarification of terms like copy or fake is to be achieved.

Painting has not been neglected and the articles by Lucia Faedo, Roberto Guerrini, Maria Donato, and Mariette de Vos examine themes as diverse as *ekphrasis*, paradigmatic literature, and the reception of antique wall painting from the Middle Ages onwards. Mariette de Vos writes with the authority of a co-author of a major guidebook to Pompeii and is, together with Himmelmann, equally at home in archaeological and art-historical research; her lucid essay gives the general reader an invaluable up-dating on the critical fortune of Roman wall painting and fountain design. By contrast, Lucia Faedo fares less well with her inquest on the most famous of all lost paintings, *The Calumny of Apelles*. She clearly experienced difficulty in finding something new to say and she never transcends a minutely philological approach.

Both volumes of *Memoria dell'antico* prove a compact survey of new research in an important sector of archaeology and the history of art. The vision offered is kaleidoscopic, at times contentious, but generally informative and absorbing.

Harvard Humanities



Moscow Diary

WALTER BENJAMIN

Translated by Richard Sieburth
Foreword by Gershom Scholem
Edited by Gary Smith

Walter Benjamin's diary dealing with his two-month stay in Moscow from December 1926 to the end of January 1927 is an important work on several levels. As well as providing an account of his love affair with Asia Lacis, the book is the story of a failed romance with the Russian Revolution, for Benjamin journeyed to Russia to arrive at a decision about joining the Communist Party. On yet another level, the diary offers an evocative eyewitness portrait of Moscow which will be of tremendous interest to students of this fascinating period in Russian history.

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NICOLE LORAUX

Translated by Alan Sheridan

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Times Literary Supplement

£3.50 Paper 96pp 0-674-94575-1

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American notes

Christopher Hitchens

At long last, there has been a serious blow struck at the grotesque American literary prize racket. And, for once, there is no suspicion that the attack is motivated by a "sour grapes" mentality.

Peter Taylor's reputation as a novelist does not rest on prizes and awards. Not very many people noticed that he began to criticize the prize industry when he won the PEN Faulkner award for fiction last spring. But that recognition, and other comparable ones, lent weight and dignity to the very strong telegram which he sent to the judges of the American Book Awards two weeks ago. Declaring the awards "a disservice to the arts", he added:

I wish to have my name in no way associated with the American Book Awards. I consider the naming of three candidates in advance for publicity's sake an invidious practice. Artists and their work cannot be a matter for competition. A work of art is only as good as it is individual and as the artist's individual view is reflected.

If it wasn't for the fact that Taylor has garnered so many palms in his time, there might have been the suspicion that he objected to being shortlisted for his most recent book *A Summers to Memphis* alongside Norman Rush's *Whites* and E. L. Doctorow's *World's Fair*. Taylor made a sardonic comment on this very point, telling one interviewer that he was pretty sure he wouldn't win and would get a runner-up cheque. "I can't afford to be heroic for \$10,000," he said, "but I can for \$1,000."

Anne Tyler, one of this year's judges, generously commented: "Good for him. He's right about the way the ceremony is designed – the spectacle of the loser. In that way the ABA is worse than some of the other awards, but they all have the fatal flaw; that one book is better than any other. Life just doesn't work that way." Gail Goodwin, who headed the fiction jury, acknowledged that "we took three winners and transformed them into a winner and

two losers". There was a widespread sense, in the Starlight Room of the Waldorf-Astoria where the awards were announced, that the whole business is getting too much like the Oscars. And although the book trade says that the process is good for sales and promotion, it's also clear that there is a limit to the national tolerance for hype. More striking than any one aspect of this business is the pomposity and *amour-propre* of the cultural commissars. Christopher Lehman-Haupt, book critic for the *New York Times*, was ordered to withdraw as a member of the panel of fiction judges because his newspaper felt that "Times staffers cannot afford to extend their already imperial power over cultural and other affairs." Memo to the *Times* editors – we'll be the judge of that.

Following the lead of the Library of Congress in appointing a poet laureate, New York state has decided to have an author. The title of "state author" is somehow unattractive, but it is sweetened by an accompanying Edith Wharton Citation of Merit and an emolument of \$10,000. The first occupant of the post is to be Grace Paley, who will hold it for two years and give readings from her work as well as lectures. There is hype in this tendency too, and some prospect of state and regional boosterism as others follow suit. But Robert Penn Warren as laureate and Grace Paley as state author make an encouraging start.

You will either care, or care not, for this item, smoking. Every day brings news of a fresh restriction on smokers, who are now banned from most Federal properties, military bases and cinemas. The "thank you for not" logo. But there is, at long last, a successful magazine devoted to the pleasures and advantages of with its maddeningly "previous" implication (so disliked by John Self in *Money*, who carried

on not smoking) is to be found on all sides. It can be seen even on the exteriors of some outstandingly stuffy buildings. Those who are short on wind and long on tolerance should fly to *Philip Morris*, a publication which has already grown weary of jokes about puff pieces. With a circulation of five million, probably padded somewhat by a free mailing list, *Philip Morris* tries to keep the spirit of Marlboro country alive. Leading advocates include Fran Leibowitz, who is famous for not knowing any better. Key articles have included lyrical stuff on Jamestown, Virginia, and the generally nicotine-sodden origins of the English settlement of North America. Features on cigarette case collecting make a pitch to the more refined. Taking the war into the enemy's camp, *Philip Morris* is about to endow a literary award for the best defence of the right of tobacco companies to advertise on television. The award is grandly couched in the framework of the First Amendment protecting freedom of expression.

Late last month, the Library of Congress became the possessor of a facsimile of the *Domesday Book*. This record of death and taxes, presented on its 900th anniversary and now on view, was produced by the Public Record Office in London and handed over to Daniel Boorstin, Librarian of Congress, by the new British Ambassador Sir Anthony Acland. The gift is augmented by a new translation, an index and a reconstructed map of eleventh-century England. It is also accompanied by a computerized version of the tome, produced by a mixed media team of medievalists and scientists at the University of California at Santa Barbara. An article in the *Smithsonian* magazine breathes exactly the appropriate mood of anglophilia in speaking of "a lost world – a world full of knights, villeins, cottars and sokemen, where rents were paid in sticks of eels and cesters of honey by tenants called

Ralph the Haunted and Olwyn the Rat". This is precisely how British Airways advertises the allure of the old country on billboards in midtown Manhattan.

I think our school does not need a laboratory rule because some time people have to go and they would let you and then when you doing your work one of the teachers happen to get up and mosey on out to the restroom to go to the bathroom just after she or he told you your not aloud to go to the restroom.

According to the Department of Education this week, this is a typical sample of the writing standard at the eighth grade (ie thirteen to fourteen-year-olds) in American schools. It seems that the literacy crisis, which has recently been the subject of innumerable books and television specials, is far, far worse than anybody suspected. This rising generation, according to the report, is incapable of writing analytically or persuasively or of telling a story. Furthermore, the rate of performance and ability actually declines as students move from the fourth to the eleventh grade. This must quite simply mean that teachers are "passing" students who cannot in any serious sense read or write. Since many local studies show that teachers cannot pass the literacy test either, this may not be all that surprising. Commenting on the report, the leader of the largest teachers' union said, "Let me assure you that no teacher can grade, with attention to more than mechanics, papers written by 150 students on any ongoing basis." Why does this make one think that the problem might be more than the size of the classes?

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 307
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than January 2. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration. Entries, marked "Author Author 307" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on January 7.

1 What about the New Year, then – January the first? That seemed a good idea – starting the New Year – 1939. The New Year – the turn of the year that meant spring before long. Then it would be warmer, Maidenhead would be warmer. He didn't want to have to go to Maidenhead in the cold.

2 "If only I could get down to Sidecup I've been waiting for the weather to break. He's got my paper, this man I left them with, it's got it all down there. I could prove everything."

3 Des. Basingstoke!
Mar. Basingstoke it is!
Competition No 363
Winner: J. McGaskarth
Answers:

1 ha chat
chat chatchat
chatchat chatchat
shahchatsah
shah
ha
Edwin Morgan "French Persian Cats Having A Ball"

2 Thus the janky bench
man who r a i d the idiotic affair
In the first place
dis h e n c h e s himself

Christine Brooke-Rose, *Thru*.

3 I'll try the whole cause, and con- domin- you to death!
Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Letters

Translation Determined

Sir, – Reviewing my book *Translation Determined* (November 28), Roy Harris seizes on a point I make near the beginning which, he thinks, entitles him to dismiss not only the rest of the book but the whole philosophical debate about Quine's indeterminacy thesis. In his opinion the futility of that debate is "immediately obvious to anyone but a professional philosopher". (He is a professor of linguistics. The extent of fruitful interaction between linguists and philosophers shows that such prejudice is idiosyncratic.)

But these theoretical puzzles cannot always be so easily swatted aside. To some people the futility of the debate about the motion of the earth was "immediately obvious". Professor Harris is wrong to assume that his objection to Quine's notion of a translation manual undercuts the whole debate. Quine himself sometimes puts his thesis in terms of bilingual translators. Their respective renderings in one language of a sentence of the other might be so different, he maintains, that at least one of them would count their rival translations as not at all equivalent; yet nothing could show that either was mistaken. In my book I have tried to explain how this thesis is by no means trivial, and in the end false. Roy Harris leaves these claims untouched.

ROBERT KIRK,
11 Westhorpe, Southwell, Nottinghamshire.

Sir, – The review by Roy Harris (November 28) of Robert Kirk's book, *Translation Determined*, begins: "The number of thinkers . . . who have managed to say anything fundamental or new about translation is very few . . ."

In my opinion, this is not correct English. I would say "few thinkers" but "a small number of thinkers". The question has a practical importance for me, as I have recommended the articles in *The Times Literary Supplement* to my students in Hamburg as models of good English.

GREELEY STAHL,
Am Klingenberg 12, Hamburg, German Federal Republic.

'A Life in Movies'

Sir, – I share Alexander Walker's enthusiasm for Michael Powell's autobiography, *A Life in Movies* (October 31), and am therefore puzzled why he thinks it is "bound to upset academic critics" – among whom apparently I am to be numbered on the strength of my recent study of Powell and Pressburger, *Arrows of Desire*. This misconception seems to follow from Walker's delight that Powell's book contains "not one line of theory", although why he should find this significant in what is after all an autobiography escapes me. At any rate, it appears to disprove my claim in *Arrows of Desire* that an important reason for the controversy that accompanied The Archers' progress through the 1940s was their disregard for conventional realism and narrative plausibility.

But can Walker seriously believe that *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, *A Canterbury Tale*, *A Matter of Life and Death* and *Black Narcissus* spring "directly out of a realist, narrative tradition", when compared

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Agnes Smiedley (1892–1950): correspondence and first-hand accounts or other manuscripts about her; for a biography.
Alan Laitrop,
2614 Lincoln Street NE, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55418, USA.

James Brand Tinker (1863–1922), literary agent: any recollections, biographical information, photographs and whereabouts of relatives.
Barbara Belford,
38 Great Percy Street, London WC1X 9QR.

Elizabeth Luyens: any letters, manuscripts, memorabilia, photographs or other information for the authorized biography, commissioned by Michael Joseph Ltd.
Nelson and Susan Hartley,
146 Holmwood Road, London W14 3EE.

with their contemporaries among British wartime and post-war films? Or is he so concerned to banish the dreaded spectre of "theory" (like Lindsay Anderson in his *TLS* review of my book [May 16], which quaintly conscripts me into a "New Criticism" that has no truck with "meaning") that he cannot bring himself to admit The Archers' exuberant use of fantasy to drive home their unfashionable concern with moral and aesthetic values?

Walker can scarcely be unaware of Powell's frequent attacks in published interviews on the tyranny of realism in British cinema and of both his and Pressburger's passionate commitment to exploiting the "magic" inherent in cinema. This is not to deny the importance of a strategic *illusion* of realism at crucial moments in their films: in his autobiography Powell instances the distaste of British critics for Vicky's blood-stained death in *The Red Shoes*, observing that "the whole point of the scene was the conflict between romance and realism". But if there is any single theme running through Powell's memoir it is surely his lifelong ambition to restore the integral fantasy that he first discovered in silent cinema by working towards the completely "composed film", in which "music, emotion, image and voices all [blend] together into a new and splendid whole".

It would be a sad, though perhaps predictable, irony if, even at this happy stage in the belated recognition of The Archers' achievement, they could only be validated by being received into the company of "red-blooded

realists" that is invoked in the heading of Walker's review.

IAN CHRISTIE,
34 Endymion Road, London N4.

Forms of Address

Sir, – Bridget Brophy (November 14) scolds the American editor of a Jane Austen handbook for perpetrating the "howler" "Lady Maria Bertram" and recommends the study of *Titles and Forms of Address*.

Your reviewer of John Mortimer's *Paradise Postponed* in the same issue (Commentary), who refers to the former Miss Grace Oliver, now married to Sir Nicholas Fanner, as "Lady Grace Fanner", could profit from a perusal of the same work.

DONALD GREENE,
Department of English, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089.

The Empress of Ireland

Sir, – May I join the no doubt long list of correspondents from here and elsewhere to point out the error in E. S. Turner's review of *The Titanic: The full story of a tragedy* by Michael Davie (October 10)?

The Empress of Ireland was not sunk in the fog "off Newfoundland" but in the St Lawrence River, near Rimouski, Quebec.

DONALD CANT,
15882 Mcbeth Road, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Perry Anderson is the author of *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, 1983.

Chris Baldick is the author of *The Social Mission of Criticism 1848–1932*, 1983.

Christina Bewley is the author of *Thomas Muir of Huntershill*, 1981.

David Bradshaw is a lecturer in English at Queen Mary College, London. He is writing a biography of Aldous Huxley.

John Deathridge is co-author of the *New Grove Wagner*, 1984. His *Wagner Werkverzeichnis* has recently been published in Germany.

Tim Dooley's collection of poems, *The Interrupted Dream: Poems 1971–1984*, was published in 1985.

Christopher Fryling is Head of the Department of Cultural History at the Royal College of Art. He is the author of *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone*, 1981.

P. N. Furbank's books include *E. M. Forster: A Life*, 1977 and 1978.

Henry Gifford is the author of *Pasternak: A critical study*, 1977, and *Tolstoy*, 1982, in the Past Masters series. His 1985 Clark Lectures have been published as *Poetry in a Divided World*, which was reviewed in the *TLS* of November 21.

Rhannon Goldthorpe is a Fellow of St Anne's College, Oxford. She is the author of *Sartre: Literature and theory*, 1984.

Christopher Hawtree's anthology of the magazine *Night and Day* was published last year.

Christopher Hitchens is Washington columnist of the *Nation*.

Charles Hope is a lecturer in Renaissance Studies at the Warburg Institute, University of London. He is the author of *Tilton*, 1980.

Robert Irwin's books include *History of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria*, 1985, and *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, which was published earlier this year. His novel, *The Limits of Vision*, was published recently.

Marc Jordan's *Edmé Bouchardon* was published last year.

Roger Morris is a lecturer in Economic History at the University of Edinburgh. His *Cholera 1832* was published in 1976.

David Nokes's *Jonathan Swift: A hypocrite reversed* was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1985.

Peter Reading's *Essential Reading*, and his new collection of poems, *Siet*, were published recently.

Pat Rogers is the editor of *The New Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature*, which will be published next year.

Colin Roman is editor of the *Journal of the British Astronomical Association*. His books include *Deep Space*, 1982, and *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the World's Science*, 1983.

C. A. Russell is Professor of the History of Science and Technology at the Open University and President of the British Society for the History of Science. His books include *Cross-Currents: Interactions between science and faith*, 1985, and *Lancastrian Chemist: The early years of Sir Edward Frankland*, which was published earlier this year.

Richard Shannon is the author of *Gladstone*, a biography, the first volume of which was published in 1982.

Oliver Taplin is the author of *Greek Tragedy in Action*, 1979.

John Ure's books include *The Quest for Captain Morgan*, 1983. His *Trepassers on the Amazon* was reviewed in the *TLS* of November 21.

Mary Shelley: any letters or other pertinent material; for the third and final volume of *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (Johns Hopkins University Press).

Betty T. Bennett,
College of Arts and Sciences, The American University, 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, DC 20016, USA.

Lillian Baylis: information, personal recollections and letters sought, particularly any news of her family; for a new biography.

Sara Wheeler,
Queen Anne Press, 3rd Floor, Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7QX.

Women During the Second World War: personal reminiscences of women who did war work or military service; for a book.

F. V. Davies,
Mariners, Dormans Park, East Grinstead, Sussex.

General Books



The Young Freud

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This compelling study of the young Freud frames his genius in the distinctive milieu of late-nineteenth century Vienna, and expertly portrays Freud's intellectual adventure, the mechanisms of his scientific discoveries, his character and personal development, and his relationship and rupture with the culture of his time. 208 pages, £12.95 (0 631 13749 1)

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COMMENTARY

Convivial commissions

Elizabeth Barry

Edward Ardizzone
Sally Hunter and Patrick Seale,
2 Motcomh Street, London SW1, until
December 19

"Thomas Hardy - *Under the Greenwood Tree*", 1945, "Anthony Trollope (illustrations for the *Radio Times*", 1950s; these two pen-and-ink sketches, out of a hundred or so at Sally Hunter and Patrick Seale Fine Art, are bread-and-butter commissions which seem to contain the essential Ardizzone: careful composition, solid modelling, cross-hatching and a certain conspiratorial charm. The artist, you feel, is fond of his subject, however mundane. This small, closely hung exhibition, which also contains works by Edward Ardizzone's friends (including Bernard Meninsky, Anthony Gross, Edward Bawden and Quentin Bell) and by his family, is a reminder of a life's work as a professional artist in an era of academic art training and illustrated books. Ardizzone (1900-1979), the son of an Italian who became a nationalized Frenchman, began and ended his career as an illustrator, expanding briefly as a war artist in North Africa, France and Italy from 1939 to 1945 and as the originator of some highly individual books for children. An ubiquitous classical sturdiness, in the tradition of Cruikshank or Doyle rather than Rackham or Coldcott, made him one of the best-known and loved illustrators of the 1950s and 60s.

Ardizzone's public work is not much on show here. Instead of books we have a range of informal drawings, mainly in pen or pencil and many of them little more than shorthand sketches, which emphasize the artist's convivial nature. Small commissions, invitations, Christmas cards, local scenes ("The Mews Pub", "Carol singers at Elgin Street"), even

doodles, point up Ardizzone's facility and reveal the domestic, rather humdrum side of his work. There are many examples of his skill in using restricted space - borders and narrow bands are crammed with figures - and he was clearly a master of the small line drawings which used to be found at chapter headings. There is a display case containing copies of his books *Indian Diary 1952-53* and *Diary of a War Artist*, but there is nothing on the walls from India and the few war pictures seem only to show a predilection for the undramatic. The large colour lithograph "Shelter" (one of the few works in colour) and the two drawings "Soldiers Resting, Alamcin" and "Women Making Camouflage Nets", with their characteristically huddled figures, recall his complaint, "a maddening war, only the dead and dying stay still for you to draw". One feels the lack everywhere of words, particularly Ardizzone's words.

Although it is pleasant to see (and to have the opportunity to buy) these small-scale samples by a popular artist, the show does not represent his entire range. Disappointingly, the exhibition does not cover the children's books, Ardizzone's most successful work and the proper field for his genius with words and pictures and for his charm. At a time before illustrated books were superseded by picture books, when colour was both less widespread and less vehement, Ardizzone created images and adventures of great originality. His work is always quietly humorous. Several finished drawings give an inkling of one reason for his success with children. The figures of the lady athletes in two watercolours of the Women's Gymnastics at the Mexico Olympics and the self-conscious poses in several studies of life classes are agreeably absurd; an unassuming note which is echoed elsewhere in the exhibition by Quentin Bell's wonky ceramics with their light-hearted decorations and ridiculous price-tags.



Fabrizio Chiari's etching of "Venus and Mercury", after Poussin, from the exhibition reviewed below.

Compositional conflicts

Marc Jordan

Nicolas Poussin: Venus and Mercury
Dulwich Picture Gallery, until January 18

Long considered to be a damaged copy of a lost work known through an etching and a magnificent bistre drawing, this early, incompletely resolved but thematically prescient painting has always been overshadowed by the more famous canvases in the collection of Poussins at Dulwich. Hazlitt, for instance, who in his enthusiastic praise for the Dulwich Poussins did not otherwise distinguish between originals and copies, failed to mention "Venus and Mercury" in his account of the gallery. Indeed it was not until in the 1940s when Anthony Blunt recognized a small, square canvas of music-making putti in the Louvre as the missing part of a composition probably cut up by a wily dealer in the later eighteenth century that the Dulwich picture was paid much attention.

But, as the first of the Dulwich gallery's promising "Paintings in their Contexts" exhibitions shows, "Venus and Mercury" amply rewards attention with new insights into the artist's early work, while the chequered history of the canvas serves as a reminder of the terrible vulnerability of the individual work of art. With the grandest of its Poussins on tour in Japan, Dulwich has reunited the two parts of "Venus and Mercury" for the first time since the definitive Poussin show of 1960 in Paris. Fabrizio Chiari's etching of the picture, one of the earliest prints made after the artist's work, and the beautiful drawing made by Poussin for Chiari to work from, as well as an eighteenth-century copy painted before the canvas was mutilated, help to reconstruct the composition. Something of the picture's original sonorosity, Venetian colouring, so characteristic of Poussin's work of the later 1620s but largely lost in this darkened and worn canvas, is suggested by another work of these first, difficult years in Rome, the "Nupture of Bacchus", lent by the National Gallery.

If the subject of "Venus and Mercury", an original variation on the traditional theme of the education of Cupid, hasn't the weight and rigour of the great Stoic and Christian histories of Poussin's maturity, its meaning, teased out by Richard Verdi in a lucid and informative catalogue essay, nevertheless already seems to indicate his characteristic commitment to the intellectual and creative life. Venus and Mercury, seated nude in a wooded Tiliadesque landscape with Venus's dove-drawn car behind them, dominate the larger right-hand, Dulwich fragment of the picture. Verdi identifies the two putti wrestling at their feet as Eros and Anteros, allegorized in the Renaissance into earthly and spiritual love. As Verdi points out, "their fighting poses allude to the contending

claims within mankind itself between a desire for earthly pleasure and gratification and the higher pursuit of beauty and the arts". The child proffering wreaths ready for the victor (Anteros has beaten his rival to the ground) and the harmonious music-making infant quartet who appear on the Louvre fragment seem intended to underline the Apollonian character of the painting's theme - the superiority of the intellectual and artistic pursuits over purely sensual pleasures.

With the juxtaposition of the two pieces of the picture and the help of the catalogue the elevated and distinctive character of the French painter's aspirations, even at this relatively early stage in his slow development begin to be apparent; the shallow frieze-like structure of the painting must have appeared distinctive in Baroque Rome. Yet it may be that the element of conflict or ambivalence is more central to Poussin's theme than Verdi will allow. Though Mercury's role as god of eloquence and educator of mankind is clear it is difficult to agree that this languid, nude Venus with her rose is "obviously" the celestial Venus of the Neoplatonists. Oblivious to Mercury's gesture towards the symbols of the arts tumbled at his feet, she seems to offer a tempting, earthly alternative to the life of significant toil; just as the goat-hoofed, myrtle-crowned young wrestler seems only temporarily bested by his winged intellectual rival. Such an unresolved and never fully resolvable conflict between will and instinct, head and heart, soul and body is familiar enough from the poetic dialogues of the seventeenth century.

For this reason it seems a pity that, though the well-produced catalogue contains a useful essay by Katie Scott on later owners of "Venus and Mercury", which throws interesting light on Poussin's critical reputation and speculates on the motives, probably commercial, of whoever cut up what can never have been a very homogeneous composition, none of the contributors speculates on who might have been the original owner of a painting with such an unusual subject. Yet we know that on his arrival in Rome Poussin was introduced by the poet G. B. Marino into the cultivated circle surrounding the lawyer and Papal diplomat Cassiano dal Pozzo. Pozzo, by no means rich, were for many years the painter's most faithful and sympathetic patrons, commissioning easel paintings of classical or devotional themes, so that Poussin was able largely to avoid treating the hectic imagery of the Counter-Reformation altarpiece or the crude and flattering allegories of aristocratic decorations. It is in just this circle that the essentially literary subject-matter of Poussin's "Venus and Mercury" could have evolved. And it is to just this circle that the sentiment and refined allegorical presentation of this painting would have appealed.

A surfeit of ecstasy

Oliver Taplin

CARYL CHURCHILL and DAVID LAN
A Mouthful of Birds
Royal Court Theatre

A menagerie of interesting ideas has gone into John Stock's new production, and there is plenty of good acting and choreographed movement. So why does it not work better? I suspect that the trouble is a lack of form. The many individually intriguing fragments were never dismembered from a whole play and they cannot be reconstituted into one. An idea remotely based on *Bacchae* does not make an archetypal myth, especially when the fundamental spatial division of city and wild mountain in Euripides is given no palpability at the Royal Court.

"Imagine you are drinking tea with your tedious husband while an inner voice tells you to drown your baby in the bathwater"; "Imagine that you are a Euromerchant in meat who falls in love with a pig and who goes to the abattoir to lament it". Like so many improvisation-based efforts, the outcome is jerky and episodic, with mundane matter one moment and frenzied shrieking the next, constantly riding the clichés and bathos which threaten the Method. At the same time, this company of seven is very good at it; all are swiftly and passionately "possessed" by their roles (and there are quite a lot of lines that are deliberately funny as well).

Instead of the conventional programme there is a "Theatrescript" (72pp. Methuen, £13.00, 0413 154602) with the text and production photographs as well as the usual cast biographies and so forth - much better value than unhealthy adverts. Here the authors, Caryl Churchill and David Lan, explain how they have taken their subject, "possession", beyond mediums, gift of tongues etc, into the everyday. David Lan writes "We were interested in...possession by forces within as well as without: by fear, by anxiety, by habit. We chose to see possession as any form of behaviour that is not entirely under one's own control". But what, then, is excluded? The play is made up of

seven studies of about a quarter of an hour each, and all are, in fact, more or less violent and sensational. The most "ordinary" concern a suppressed transexual who is fascinated by the story of a hermaphrodite, Hercules Barbin ("who s/he?"), and a young black acupuncturist with DTs. They are all better endowed with circumstantial quirks of this kind than with psychological conviction: seven characters in search of a fuller identity.

The *Bacchae* impinges as no more than scattered allusions until the closing scenes. The four women, watched by the (duplicated) Dionysus, tear the transexual Pentheus (who is called - inevitably - Derick) to pieces. Almost immediately they become "unpossessed", and all but one turn away from the slaughter to slink home. Why is there no improvisation on "Imagine you have just come to your senses to find that you have torn a fellow human being into fragments with your bare hands"? In any case, one woman is not "exorcised" by the experience: Doreen, an overheated and angry secretary, the Agave figure, refuses to go home, with the words: "There's nothing for me there. There never was. I'm staying here." At this point the Theatrescript stage-direction reads "The WOMEN turn back and stay", though I must confess that in performance this did not make a memorable impression.

Yet for the authors this is evidently the key moment. Caryl Churchill writes "At the end of *The Bacchae*, Agave gives up following Dionysus, but in this play she and the women stay on the mountain, accepting that they can't go back to their previous lives and welcoming further change"; and David Lan, more pugnaciously, "At the end of *The Bacchae*, Agave, having killed her son in a surfeit of ecstasy, comes back down the mountain to the city. For our Agave this is a moment not to abandon herself to the bureaucratic powers of the state, but to fight to take back control." But in Euripides' *Bacchae* Agave does not return to her city: she departs into stateless exile. She cannot return to society with her pollution; she will continue in the wild, the outside, but nowhere near the hateful mountain of Dionysus. Violence, Euripides seems to say, *pace* David Lan, cannot become politically constructive.

An absence of strife

David Bradshaw

Kangaroo
Canon, Haymarket

Cinematically, *Kangaroo* is not the most adaptable novel. "Chapter follows chapter and nothing doing", Lawrence confesses towards the end of it, adding with a jaunty unconcern typical of his work in the early 1920s, "if you don't like the novel, don't read it." Even Jones's screenplay, on the other hand, which opens with Richard and Harriet Somers being bounded out of Cornwall and England during the First World War (an episode which occupies a superfluous, retrospective "nightmare" chapter in the novel) reveals a more responsible attitude. Yet this adaptation of *Kangaroo* is almost as unsatisfactory as the novel because Tim Burstall's direction fails to pump up the political tension which Lawrence eschews, and relies too much on the glories of the Australian outdoors. Footage of the supposedly consumptive Somers flinging himself into the ocean with all the magisterial zip of a Bondi lifeguard, reappearing from the swirling apume and making love to his wife on the sand is a gratuitous indulgence in a film which paints in vain for suspense and causative tumult. Nor is it only in his athleticism that Colin Frels's Somers contrasts with Lawrence's original. The truculent manner of the novel is replaced here by a polite, deferential character, the butt of his wife's wit, who spends a good deal of the time agog with anticipation at what he hears.

Somers is too beefy, the eponymous Kangaroo would not look out of place in a Neocast commercial. Reputedly sinister and charismatic he is merely a nasty wind-bag. Kangaroo is the leader of the Diggers, a clandestine paramilitary organization with a Lawrentian distaste for democracy, poised to confront the

growing influence of socialism with force. The Diggers are bonded by the Whitmanesque principle of "mateship", an expression of the homoerotic ideal which had tantalized Lawrence from *The White Peacock* onwards. Almost inevitably, though, the tenderness and asexuality of Lawrence's vision does not transmute easily on to the screen. When Jack Calcott, a holder of the VC and a macho saloon-brawler, inquires whether Somers loves him and when he gazettes him for not loving Kangaroo, who has desperately pleaded for the Englishman's love, it is difficult to take the imbrogio seriously. Similarly problematic are the excerpts of sententious gobbledygook from the novel which spasmodically erupt into the film, such as the scene in which the pros and cons of spunk are lengthily debated by Kangaroo and Somers.

The flatness and the absence of strife in the film mean that the riotous clash between the Diggers and the socialists in which twenty people are killed (there are four fatalities in the novel) does not work as a denouement, because we have simply not been prepared for it. Furthermore the battle appears to take place, not in the centre of Sydney, but at a sanitized location completely cleared of people. In the same way, a caption screened at the end of the film, informing the audience that D. H. Lawrence died in January 1930, is neither warranted nor accurate. This film will please neither the "thought-adventurers" whom Lawrence considered the ideal readers of his novel, nor those misled by the film's poster into anticipating unadulterated excitement.

Anthony Burgess's translation of the libretto for *Carmen*, by H. Meilac and L. Halévy has recently been published (31pp. Century Hutchinson, Paperback £3.95, 09 168711 X). In his introduction, Burgess outlines some of the prosaic problems involved.

On with the glitz

John Deathridge

GEORGES BIZET
Carmen
Coliseum

Sporting a sexy picture of Sally Burgess, the English National Opera's new Carmen, the front page of the *Daily Mail* quoted her as saying "Carmen does what she likes and therefore I can play her as I like." As if to reinforce the point, page three displayed pictures of an aggressive Edwina Currie practising diligently at the Marylebone Rifle and Pistol Shooting Club "to prove the truth of the saying that the female is deadlier than the male".

It is hardly news that *Carmen* is "about" the anarchy of passion and sex wars; yet David Pountney's "new interpretation of one of the world's most widely known and well loved operas" (ENO programme) says just that, with the sole difference that the clichés are frozen into an unyielding array of dated symbols and dead metaphors. Carmen is a demotic lynx prowling among the detritus of *laissez-faire* capitalism - a boring nightmare of delapidated automobiles, aggressive cigarette ads and dazed soldiers in shabby fatigues. The war with Don José ends on the bonnet of a Lincoln Continental not far from the razzmatazz of a glitzy showbiz bonanza. The sacrificial altar is just another useful gadget, of course, suitably padded to stop it lurching up and down as José plunges his dagger into Carmen. Even the yellow uniforms of the Spanish dragoons in the original ("Va-t'en donc, canari", Carmen snaps, when José refuses to have sex with her) are reduced to dirty yellow berets, so that all Don José has to do with his symbol of cowardice is to tuck it under his shoulder lapel when the going gets tough.

At first, this *Carmen* feels like a bad joke gone haywire (an awful pun on Car-Men perhaps?) or at least a weak parody of East German *Sozialkritik*. By the end, it is depressingly earnest - an impression underscored by

Formula feelings

David Nokes

NIGEL WILLIAMS
Breaking Up
BBC1

"Are they drunk?" asks Mailer's school-chum Jackson as they observe, from the far side of a trim suburban avenue, Mailer's father's golf-clubs sailing from a window on to the front lawn, and Mailer's parents hurling insults at each other across the leafy drive. One can sympathize with the question, but in fact this embarrassing spectacle is the result not of drunkenness but of the hyperactivity which substitutes for imagination in a certain kind of television drama. *Breaking Up*, Nigel Williams's latest four-part television play, belongs to the increasingly frequent class of mini-series whose form seems designed to fulfil the requirements of scheduling rather than of drama. Lacking the integrity and concentration of the single play, they stretch out towards the formulaic cameos and bespoke issues of soap-opera. Sometimes the serial form allows for the development of character or the complexity of narrative. But often the opportunity to fill four hours rather than two is an invitation to complacency rather than concentration.

In *Breaking Up* the pace is leisurely to the point of laziness. Nearly ten minutes of the first episode were taken up with the dress rehearsal for a school production of *Hamlet*. The function of these scenes, which featured the young Mailer in a becomingly androgynous role as Ophelia with cupid's bow lips and a garland of flowers, was to supply some Oedipal colouring to the relationships of father, mother and son. Yet, though beautifully shot, they were protracted until they lost all finesse and became like a series of dull cultural blows to the head. Like the quotations from Virgil, the main effect of this allusiveness seems to be as a status symbol to distinguish this kind of work from *East Enders* with which, in fact, its content has

the programme booklet's wise words about macho men and the Carmen "enigma", not to mention the male hand on its cover stubbing out a cigarette into the midriff of a nude woman enfolded in a glass ash tray.

Yet the difficulty with *Carmen* (at least for a producer bent on a "new interpretation") is its very lack of enigma. There is hardly an opera more resistant to ambiguity and fake symbolism. There are no utopias. The music, despite its sensuousness, is direct, immediately understandable and, as Nietzsche noticed, never claims to mean more than it says. Feelings are scarcely in doubt. Nor are character flaws ever less than sharply defined - not even in the pseudo-heroic bull-fighter Escamillo (David Arnold) who, according to Bizet's score, is meant to deliver his famous song *rude and avec fatuité*.

Bizet once said that most composers, no matter how talented, "lack the one thing that could make present-day audiences understand them - melody", adding that many wrongly equate "melody" with "idea" - an antithesis that looks surprisingly, for a Frenchman anyway, like that famous Germanic opposition of spontaneous power and cerebral reflection. There are few "melodies" in Pountney's *Carmen*, though plenty of them well up from the ENO pit. Indeed, the real battle of the evening is not Carmen's with José, but the sound of Bizet's resilient score (excellently conducted by Mark Elder who manages to catch exactly the *limpidez* which Nietzsche admired) effortlessly fighting off the purty ideas on stage. Apart from John Treleven's brave, if sporadic attempts to retrieve the remnants of José, only Sally Burgess in the title role is convincing. She looks like a sullen, bored whore straight out of John Carpenter's film, *Escape from New York*. Yet, fortunately, she really does seem to play Carmen as she likes. Her singing is sensuous, subtly powerful and far from dull. And her flamenco dancing looks refreshingly genuine, just about the only thing in this production left over from the Seville *Carmen* can never quite do without.

strong affinities. This certainly would appear to be the principal justification for Alan Bennett's role here, turning in his familiar performance as a comic Mr Chips. "You reek of existential gloom", he remarks to Mailer, his voice rolling over each syllable like a mountain stream. He caresses the word "brassière" with his soft Northern intonation, giving it an air of Continental mystery. These are tones and phrases outside the range of soap opera, yet Bennett remains a guest star, a touch of class in a line-up of predictable routines.

The main problem with the series is that it has the feel of formula drama, with all the motifs of nostalgia and confrontation pre-assembled for use. Williams has pitched his play across all the major lines of conflict, where differences of class and sex and generations meet. He has carefully laid out all his dramatic trails, but the fuses remain damp. "Schools like that, they cause a lot of trouble", remarks Eileen Atkins as Mailer's mother, as if notching up a consciousness-raising point before turning back to the main marital theme. "There's divorce and divorce", observes Tony's social worker, "but this is the worst kind", a remark which seems considerably to overestimate the conflicts presented to us.

The best performances in the series come from the two boys, Mailer, played by Tim Haynes, and Jackson, played by Alexander Crockatt. They are the Jennings and Darbyshire of this work, conversing in confident tones of callow worldliness which paradoxically produce an effect of embattled innocence. For them, every question has an answer, every problem an outcome. Marriage to them can be reduced to a simple definition, as nothing but a form of legal prostitution. As in all the best school yarns, it is the children who are the repositories of rational certainty and sanity, beset by an adult world inhabited by buffoons, impostors and failures. In his period pastiche of these school-room certainties, Williams has achieved at least an affect of affectionate irony.

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The fact of creation

Sunil Khilnani

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS
Domaines de l'homme: Les carrefours du labyrinthe, II
 455pp. Paris: Seuil. 150fr.
 2020091755

Intellectual life in France has experienced a prodigious transformation over the past decade. The "revolutionary tradition" which had for so long shaped the identity of the majority of French intellectuals, has now been abandoned. Marxism, the reference point for almost all French intellectual activity between 1945 and the mid-1970s, has all but ceased to be a subject of serious discussion. It is not as yet clear what all the implications of this massive shift in preferences are. But one outcome has been the belated and somewhat embarrassed recognition now being accorded to thinkers previously largely neglected. Where once Sartre held the stage, attention has moved to Raymond Aron. Rather than the theoretical arabesques of Althusser, it is now the political philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis which commands interest.

Castoriadis is by no means on the right of the political spectrum. Yet equally certainly, he is very uneasily situated on the French Left, whose orthodoxies he has always criticized. His recent attacks on the Socialists and Communists (examples of which are collected in the volume under review) are entirely consistent with a reasoned polemic which he has conducted since 1949 when, along with Claude Lefort, he founded the now legendary review, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. In a post-war environment where to be anti-Communist was, in Sartre's phrase, to be a "stinky rat", and where to support the Communists was necessarily to support the Soviet Union, Castoriadis questioned and refused this set of equivalences. In the pages of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* he published a series of analyses of the Soviet régime, Stalinism, bureaucracy, and totalitarianism (until the 1970s, the French Left maintained a firm taboo against using this term in relation to the Soviet Union). Time and again, Castoriadis said what hardly anyone on the French Left at the time could bring themselves to say: to support the Soviet Union was in fact to be anti-revolutionary. This revolution at the outcome of the Russian Revolution pervades Castoriadis's work, and is captured by his claim in

the present volume that "politically, there is nothing to defend—aside from human lives—in Russian society".

In the late 1970s in Paris, it became not only possible but almost *de rigueur* to be seen to hold such views. Indeed, to claim some sort of association with *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (the review came to an end in 1965) became a sign of intellectual and political virtue. So widespread were such claims that Castoriadis once said, with customary irony, that if the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group had been so numerous, then surely it would have gained political power. The fact is that it was very small. But its ideas gained a wide diffusion during the 1960s and the 1970s, especially among the "gauchistes" of 1968. Yet Castoriadis himself remained a relatively obscure figure, partly because up until 1973, he published almost entirely under pseudonyms (variously Cardan, Chautieu, or Coudray).

In 1975, Castoriadis published his first major book under his own name, *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (a translation of this is forthcoming from Polity Press). This, his most important work to date, had two important effects in France. First, it provided a theoretical argument (made from the Left) for breaking with Marxism. Second, it laid the foundations for Castoriadis's own political philosophy. Aspects of this philosophy were amplified and extended in a collection of essays he published in 1978, *Les Carrefours du labyrinthe* (a translation of this appeared here in 1984). Castoriadis presents the volume under review as a sequel to this earlier collection. However, *Domaines de l'homme* is also intended to elucidate two major works which have yet to appear: *L'Élément imaginaire* and *La Création humaine*, both based on his seminars at the École des Hautes Études in Paris, where he has taught since 1980.

There is a direct continuity between the themes and ideas of Castoriadis's earlier work and the present volume. *Domaines de l'homme* collects together interviews, articles and essays composed and almost all published between 1974 and 1986. These range in scope and interest from the highly local (a piece on "The Left in 1985", a polemic against Parisian journalism) to the more widely encompassing: essays on the nature of equality, on psychoanalysis, on the imagination, on the history and philosophy of science, and on "development" and "rationality". This is an expansive book, scattering ideas freely. It estab-

lishes clearly both the originality of Castoriadis's work, and his importance in the realignment of political thought in France at present.

The core of his political philosophy is contained in probably the most interesting essay collected here, on "The Greek Polis and the Creation of Democracy". Adducing an argument which has resonances with themes to be found in Hannah Arendt and especially Heidegger, Castoriadis claims that the common flaw in Western political thought from Plato to modern liberalism and Marxism is the belief that there exists a complete and rational order of the world. The practical corollary to this is the striving somehow to link the ordering of human affairs to this pre-given order. This belief in what Castoriadis calls a "unitary ontology" obscures "the fundamental fact that human history is creation". He understands creation as a fundamental and fundamentally political question: it is a category within practical reason, founded on judgment and choice. Most crucially, it is an expression of autonomy.

A hero of the unresolved

Rhannon Goldthorpe

RONALD HAYMAN
Writing Against: A biography of Sartre
 487pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
 0297790021

Freud, according to Ronald Hayman, pushed biography decisively away from fact towards speculation; Sartre's own biographical writing veered, independently of Freud, towards fiction. While Hayman's account of Sartre's life is full of richly detailed fact and anecdote, he is by no means immune to psychoanalytic or imaginative pattern-making: all Sartre's work is "written against" the stepfather who supplanted Jean-Paul at the heart of his mother's life. Is this a reductively Freudian explanation, or a discovery of the "original choice" which, for the early existentialist Sartre, could and should be constantly called into question? Or is it the starting-point for that "totalizing" process of understanding which, according to the later Sartre, should be the goal of any biographical enterprise, and which should move dialectically between the individual, his family and class situation, and his broader historical context?

Hayman seems to encourage this last view, but shorn of its Marxist implications: Sartre, he later suggests, also wrote, either simultaneously or successively, against his patriarchal and bourgeois grandfather (who abundantly provided the superego from which Sartre believed he had been freed by the early death of his father), against the bourgeoisie, against himself (the bourgeois intellectual), against the idea of the self, against the breakdown of democracy and liberty, against anti-Stalinism, against Stalin, and, at any given moment, against everything that he had previously written.

It is true that Sartre insisted, as a moral imperative, on the need to review one's responses constantly in a rapidly changing situation. This was neither a rationalization of inconsistency nor, as Hayman would have it, a form of self-betrayal. Indeed, the difficulty with the "writing against" thesis is that it tends to underestimate the continuity in Sartre's thought and to overemphasize the contradictions between, rather than the ambiguities within, his successive intellectual positions. For instance, Hayman exaggerates Sartre's negative attitude towards the imagination. He was fascinated by it, and it dominated his work from the early phenomenological treatise *L'Imaginaire* to the Flaubert biography, to say nothing of his own creative writing. His attitude towards the imaginary was deeply ambivalent, rather than consistently negative: it might be a mode of escapism and self-deception, but it also exemplified the freedom of consciousness and its powers of transcendence. In its negation of the real it might withdraw into nihilism; it might seek to transform reality into art or to change reality itself. It was as essential to socio-political action, whether direct or indirect, as it was to creative writing and, by extension, to his

The modern world, Castoriadis claims, is dominated by two contradictory processes: the extension of the scope of rationality, and the pressure towards greater autonomy. Rationality and autonomy constitute separate and irreducible domains of human being, and express the boundaries and potentialities of human action.

Castoriadis's thinking is marked by his understanding of the Athenian ideals of democracy and politics. For instance, his present view of the Soviet Union as a "stratocracy"—a militaristic, hierarchically organized society—appears to owe something to Thucydides' contrast between Sparta and Athens. Castoriadis's attachment to Athenian democracy produces some illuminating insights; but it also makes things easy for him. Surely the important contrast for modern political theory is not that between "totalitarianism" and Athenian democracy, but that between limited and unlimited government. And that is a distinction which it is much harder to get right.

essential to the link between the two. It is also implicated in Sartre's ambitious attempts to establish the total significance of an individual life and to grasp its involvement in the movement of history, while recognizing that such "totalities" could never be complete. In this perspective the Flaubert study is not, *pace* Hayman, a compensating retreat into individualism after the failure to sustain the sociological arguments of the *Critique de la raison dialectique*. It is complementary, in its relative concreteness, to the abstractions of the *Critique*. The compensation was Sartre's direct immersion in the would-be revolution of 1968 ("L'Imagination au pouvoir") and in the anarchism of extreme left-wing politics which followed upon (or accounted for) its collapse.

Hayman's biography is more ambitious than Annie Cohen-Solal's recent, even longer, French one (reviewed in the *TLS*, July 11, 1986) in that he attempts to summarize the implications of Sartre's novels, plays, major essays and complex philosophical works in a few lapidary paragraphs. The results are uneven: Sartre's "Being" (unqualified by "in-itself" or "for-itself") is not Heidegger's "Dasein", which would be better rendered by the notion of "la réalité humaine". Sartre would not have taken as a compliment the contention that his early existential biographies of Baudelaire and Genet "are nothing if not Freudian in their approach". The claim that he never lost faith in his ability "to make the signifier transparent and the signified perfectly visible" does less than justice to the growing complexity of his views on language.

But apart from evaluating his creative and philosophical writing and his forays into aesthetics, literary criticism, anti-psychiatry and social theory, any life of Sartre must read like a global roll-call of post-war political and moral crises. His hectic involvement in events as public conscience, journalist, activist and unofficial ambassador concerns Hayman far more than the minutiae of Marxist controversy, and he is particularly sensitive to Sartre's lifelong preoccupation with the ethics of violence. Like many Sartrean dilemmas, it remained unresolved both in theory and in practice.

For Hayman, this refusal to resolve and conclude, or even to complete an *oeuvre* consisting largely of massive fragments, bears witness to achievement rather than failure. Indeed, he suggests that Sartre's importance depends more on his failures than on any of his successes, and, with a biographer's *parti pris*, he considers Sartre's greatest achievement to be the trajectory of his life. His sheer persistence was heroic and, if he failed, it was because he was addicted to the impossible. It is true that Sartre, who was not given to self-aggrandizement or affectation, maintained that committed writing should, like bananas, be consumed on the spot, and he wrote off his own commitment to writing as a form of neurosis. He would have thought it right that his intellectual progeny should, as so many did, turn upon their father. But he also maintained that writing was his life. Sartre's work is his best biography.

Those in authority

Perry Anderson

MICHAEL MANN
The Sources of Social Power
 Volume One: A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760
 589pp. Cambridge University Press. £37.50 (paperback, £12.95).
 0521308518

Who could fail to be intellectually stirred by the breadth of Michael Mann's horizon in this three-volume study? Its aim, in his own words, is nothing less than "to provide a history and theory of power relations in human societies", an enterprise he thinks "likely to be virtually synonymous with a history and theory of human society itself". Any initial misgivings that such a large promise must be idle or inflated are soon dispelled. The ambition of the conception is, against all conventional expectations, matched by the clarity and grandeur of the execution.

Mann's history of power begins with a survey of pre-historic evolution, and the reasons why it did not generally debouch into stable forms of social stratification. It then proceeds to an account of the emergence of civilization and the State in Mesopotamia, with some side-glances at other Near Eastern, Asian or American *Hochkulturen*. Sargon's Akkadian conquests are studied as the inauguration of a new configuration of power—"empires of domination", of which the Assyrian and Persian subsequently receive separate treatment. Classical Greece arises as the heir jointly of Near Eastern riverine civilization, Iron Age plough agriculture coming from the North, and Mediterranean coastal trade pioneered by the Phoenicians; hoplite infantry, however, are the key to the construction of the class-divided polis, an ordering of power without regional or other precedent. The Roman world that succeeded it defined by Mann as the first true "territorial" empire, capable of enforcing its rule uniformly across a vast geographical space rather than relying on indirect control through heterogeneous clients, as did the "empires of domination". The contradictory effects of the Roman unification of the Mediterranean generate the spread of Christianity as a religion of salvation, which then provides the crucial moral carapace for decentralized economic growth in Europe during the Dark and Middle Ages, based on self-sufficient agriculture and littoral commerce. In this environment the transition towards capitalism came to be inextricable from the growth of a multiplicity of "organic" national states, with far greater effective power over their territory—less formal reach—than any ancient empire, each at once constructed and checked by warfare between them.

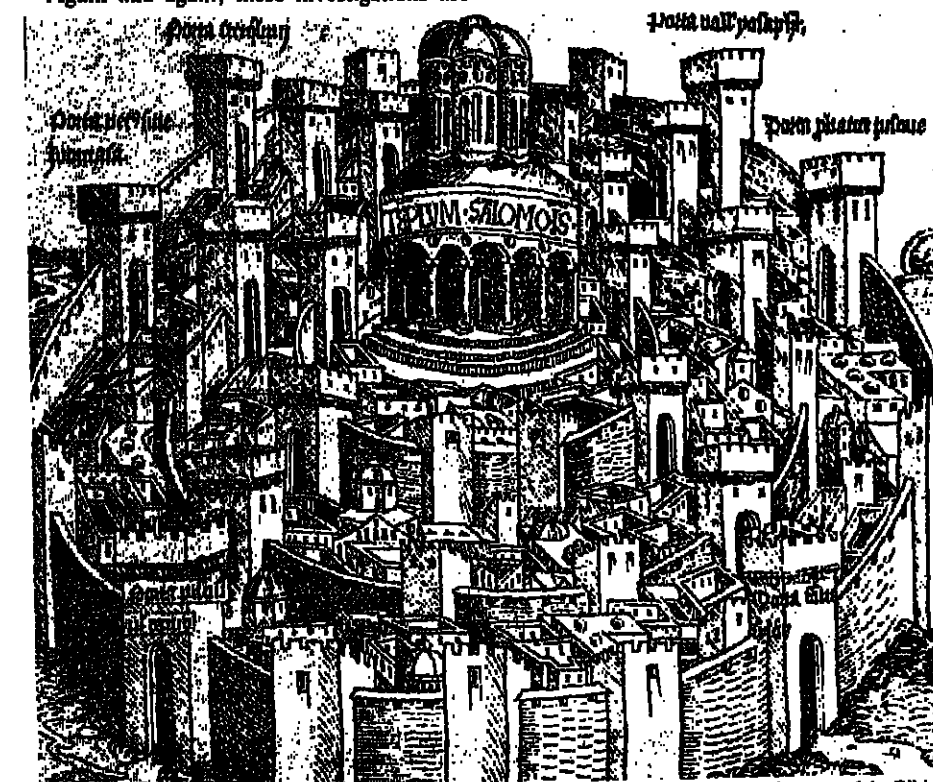
Such a simplified summary conveys little more than the chronological scope of Mann's survey—bold enough in itself. But it is the quality of his analytical narrative that is most impressive. Contemporary sociologists, howsoever well intentioned in their approach to the past, often tend to be gauche in their handling of it. Nothing could be less true in this case. Mann displays a formidable close command of the literature on his multifarious topics, and an intuitive realism of evidence that would do credit to any historian. To sustain these gifts evenly, without any appearance of strain, across a span that extends from Beaker bands to Hanoverian oligarchs is an astonishing achievement.

But it is not one superadded, as it were, to the sociological enquiry as a whole; rather it derives from it. For Mann's theory of power is what takes him so closely into his history. At one level, this theory is general and conventional enough. There are four sources of social power invoked in the title: economic, ideological, political and military. Mann's justification of this quartet is somewhat cursory—he doubts he intends to return to a more extended foundation of it in his third volume. At all events, within his own scheme "political" power (perhaps better transcribed as "administrative") at any rate, for the period of this volume, does not seem to possess the same ontological autonomy as the others: for any exercise of it manifestly depends on the possession of either ideological or military power, and normally a combination of both force and fraud. While the converse does not hold, as the

monks or marauders who cross his pages show. Political power in a "pure" state cannot exist in the same sense.

With this reduction, however, the preliminary classification is unexceptionable, if not very novel. The originality of Mann's theory lies elsewhere, at a lower level of specificity: in his comprehensive concern with what he calls the "exact infrastructures" of each kind of power—that is, the detail of their organizational techniques. The logistics of military mobility; the extent and quality of literacy; the technology of farming and the transport capacities of trade; the incidence and range of judicial control; the pattern of fiscal revenue and expenditure are typical of the areas where Mann transforms our understanding of what the historical possibilities and realities of power have been, and how they have changed, over millennia.

Again and again, these investigations are



Jerusalem from the Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493; its taken here from Kenneth Nebenzahl's Maps of the Bible Lands (164pp. Times Books. £30. 072302851).

bravura performances. Mann strenuously repudiates the "false opposition" between idealism and materialism as modes of social explanation—a "sterile dualism" he hopes to break down. But in some ways his distinctive approach is best characterized in a phrase of his colleague John Hall's, whose essay *Powers and Liberties* can be taken as an effluvia counterpart to Mann's encyclopaedic study, as an "organizational materialism". It is this common focus on the organization of contrasting types of power that confers such versatility on his sociology of it. Most practitioners, whatever their theoretical liberality in constructing or distinguishing different kinds of power, are usually at home with only one or two of them. Sociologists, like historians or the rest of us, tend to have temperamental affinities of a fairly selective sort. Weber was the great exception; and Mann is another. The validity of his claim to elude the ordinary connotations of idealism or materialism lies not in any—too familiar presumption of a—philosophical supersession of them, but in the even-handed authority and fluency with which he moves from religious doctrine to tax structure, from military strategy to agrarian ecology, from class relations to state diplomacy. All of these are unified in a single analytic of power. That might seem forbidding. An obsession with power normally suggests sinister overtones. But although Mann's optic does involve a limitation of his field of vision, there is no trace of an authoritarian fascination with his object. On the contrary, his writing is singularly humane and democratic in temper. The monumentality of the enterprise is offset by an agreeable informality of style, a prose of short, vigorous, vivid sentences, without undue jargon or rhetoric, which engages the reader in direct argument—in that regard, a far cry from Weber.

Mann describes his view of social development, in a term of Ernest Gellner's, as "episodic" rather than evolutionary. Human power—and so human society—changes in staccato bursts, rather than through any continuous growth, and its cumulative enhancement has been, he insists towards the end of the book, accidental. Much therefore depends on the choice of the episodes he singles out for attention, and the plausibility of his accounts of them.

What can be said of these? The first real crux in the book concerns his explanation of the rise of civilization and the State. Having argued that general social evolution did not lead in this direction, because tendencies to social hierarchy and inequality cyclically went into reverse as those who risked subordination in prehistoric groups moved on or away from them, Mann contends that the essential precondition for the emergence of civilization and acceptance of its discontents was a "closing of escape routes" or ecological "caging". This is a logical deduction, rather than a geographical or historical conclusion. His actual survey of the rise of civilization focuses overwhelmingly on

the Mesopotamian, where he subsequently has to note that there was not much ecological closure at all, but rather a topographical space marked by a "lack of clear-cut external boundaries", yielding a "civilization fuzzy at the edges", the product of "various interaction networks" created as much as anything by "ecological diversity".

Tactically redefining his starting-point in terms of the model he constructs of Mesopotamia, Mann then seeks to apply it to Egypt, which he finds a "deviation" because it lacked "overlapping regional networks", was, so to speak, too sequestered along the Nile. These contradictions are left in the air as he moves to China or the Indus Valley—the two other regions of major alluvial agriculture, and to Crete or Pre-Columbian America, which were not. Discussion of all these is desultory, even when they undermine the premises of the analysis most clearly ("the Maya were not particularly caged").

The origins of civilization pose one of the most long-standing conundra of the social sciences, and Mann cannot be blamed for having failed to solve it. But here his method has let him down. Only a comparative analysis—more firmly inductive in spirit—could offer a hope of coherent explanation. Such an account would have, among other things, to pay closer attention to the place of organized religion in the birth of the State than Mann gives it: a point emphasized by a Marxist, Maurice Godelier; and it would have to look more systematically at the range of economic surplus available for either. But above all, it could not privilege one region and treat all others as perfunctory adjuncts. Mann's opening Mesopotamian option is not, however, arbitrary—it has definite significance for what follows.

The second major theme of the book is the nature and import of "empires of domination". Sargon, Assurbanipal and Cyrus are the leading figures here: all establishing imperial States across the breadth of the Tigris and Euphrates. Mann's dissection of the mechanisms of rule that allowed these sprawling structures to be built in a world of desperately limited transport

and communication, of ethnic and cultural localism, is excellent. The theoretical acuity—also empirical liveliness—of these pages make them for the best analysis of the early Near Eastern Empires that we possess. Mann himself puts great weight on their enforcement of what, after Herbert Spencer, he calls "compulsory cooperation", or the extraction of a greater economic surplus via an increase in military coercion. His account of the potential benefits for production and circulation (if not for producers) from imperial repression and exploitation brings a formal precision and detail to the process it has not had before. But he is wrong in claiming that his view of such empires of domination is in this respect particularly heterodox. If anything, it has always been the standard judgment of most authorities—satirized indeed by E. P. Thompson in his poem on the First Emperor of Ch'in: "However many the emperor slew / the scientific historian / (while taking note of contradiction) / affirms that productive forces grew".

Mann's third principal topic is the Classical World, or more especially the character and fate of the Roman Empire. His treatment of Greece is full of admiring insight, and shows the skill with which he can deploy class analysis (hitherto kept well in the background) when he judges it relevant; the distinctions he proposes, here and elsewhere, between the different kinds of class struggle observable in history are eminently sensible and useful, once freed from a procrustean reference to the "institution" of Greek class struggle as a "power jump". But there is relatively little articulation between the Greek and Roman episodes of his story, the former becoming something of a parenthesis in the narrative as a whole. The brunt of his interest falls on the Roman conquest and control of the Mediterranean, viewed as a higher stage of imperialism—the advent of the first true "territorial empire". Mann argues that the two axes of Roman power were the legionary army, an infantry force superior to any other in its day, and a ruling-class culture of unprecedented literacy capable of assimilating any conquered élite in its path. Following Keith Hopkins, he stresses the economic multiplier effects of the first, which generated the great prosperity of the first two centuries of the Principate; and the ideological divider effects of the second, once the material conditions of cultural universalism—in literacy, language and trade—spread beyond the ruling strata, and so subverted official cults to generate the triumph of Christianity under the Dominate.

Neither of these processes tells us much about the fall of the Empire. Mann does briefly broach relationships between the State and the landed classes, but in an uncharacteristically nebulous fashion that compares somewhat lamely with Chris Wickham's recent treatment of the same subject; there is little sense of the increasing social polarization that gripped the Western Empire. Deprived of an internal dynamic, Mann therefore has to fall back on the familiar ground of increased external pressures to account for the end of the Roman order. But barbarian invasions notoriously cannot explain Byzantine survival; hence he is driven to ignore the subsequent life of the Eastern Empire altogether, his narrative consigning Byzantium to an oblivion into which even Gibbon did not venture to thrust it. The rise of Rome is far more memorable here than its decline.

One of the reasons for this is that Mann's interest is much more centrally engaged by another question: why and how did Christianity triumph in the Roman world? His discussion of this is in many ways a *tour de force*, one of the most original and compelling parts of the book, above all as it explores the social pathways by which the new faith asserted itself. But there is a suggestive bias to it. All religions have a dual existence: as systems of individual consolation within the cosmos, and as bonds of social cohesion within the community. Weber concentrated on the first, Durkheim on the second—respectively the sacred in human relationships with nature, and with society. Mann's interpretation of Christianity is single-mindedly Durkheimian. "Christianity was not a response to material crisis, nor was it a spiritual alternative to the material world. The crisis was one of social identity: what society do I belong to?" This blunt affirmation, whose lack of nuance contrasts with the general way

Masses in the mind

Andrew Dobson

JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET
The Revolt of the Masses
 Translated by Anthony Kerrigan
 240pp. University of Notre Dame Press. £20.
 0268016097

Originally published in Spain in 1929, *La Rebelión de las Masas* is Ortega's most famous and most translated work. Its main theme is accurately summed up by Saul Bellow in his short (two-page) foreword to this new translation: "It is Ortega's view that we in the West live under a dictatorship of the commonplace". Beneath this, however, lies a developed sociology of elitism. Ortega disabuses us of the idea that either "mass" or "élite" are terms intended to have class connotations—indeed, he believes that every class will have its own mass and an outstanding minority. Mass-man is defined rather by an attitude of mind, which might be characterized as passive philistinism, as against the "select individual" whose definitive feature is that he "demands more from himself than do others".

Ortega's starting-point is the extraordinary increase in the population of Europe since 1800. Yet from his perspective it is not the mass itself which is the problem but where it is to be found—in roles created by, and therefore reserved for, an élite: "artistic and aesthetic enterprises; the functioning of government; political judgment on public matters". The danger attendant upon this intrusion is that the mass is unaware and uncomprehending of the delicate

roots of its inheritance. "Born into" civilization, he writes, the masses threaten its survival by thinking that it is something natural, whereas in reality it was something "founded", with much difficulty, by a few people. In a healthy polity the attitude of the mass towards the élite will be one of "humility, adoration and enthusiasm", whereas Ortega considered contemporary Western society to be characterized by a mass which had invaded élite territory.

Ortega often wondered why this, his most widely read work, never had much of a reception in Britain. Anthony Kerrigan provides a clue in his useful introduction when he refers to Ortega's "classic liberalism"—a liberalism he defines as "alien... to the twentieth century's worldwide egalitarian Zeitgeist". The universalist, collectivist traditions which inform liberalism in Britain have always prevented *The Revolt of the Masses* from being required reading for British liberals. To the extent that the post-war collectivist consensus is, however, breaking down throughout Europe, there exists a genuine possibility of Ortega's exhumation, and it may be that the New Right in particular would find in him a kindred spirit.

Kerrigan's new translation makes Ortega's contribution to the debate splendidly accessible to a modern audience. It is much the best there has been, passing the acid test of readability by avoiding the pitfalls of literalism. Where, for example, the 1932 translation (authorized by Ortega) insists on rendering the Spanish historical present by the English present, Kerrigan uses the past tense. His confidence with the original and willingness to experiment formally also help to convey the stylishness of Ortega's Spanish.

complex evidence is handled in his study, derives from Mann's overall angle of vision. In a work devoted to social power, religion must be thematically subsumed as a form of it. That can tell us part – an important part – of the truth about the rise of Christianity; but far from all of it. For the "history of power" is not "virtually synonymous" with human history *tout court*, contrary to his initial claim. In making it he veers close to the characteristic modern confusion that simply equates power and culture, whose foremost exponent has been Michel Foucault – otherwise far removed from his concerns. What Mann's account of Christianity casts radically aside is its intellectual setting within the classical thought-world: the extent to which it could exploit the moral and philosophical gap between a rationalized culture, capable of producing an Epicurus or Lucretius, and residualized cults, ever more degraded to the imperial ends of a Domitian or Elagabalus, in a new explanation of the universe. The role of the supernatural is all but banished from Mann's account of Christianity: the word "miracle" never occurs in it. Yet it is upon these that contemporary polemics with paganism above all turned: not on alternative versions of the social order, but on divine intervention in the natural order. Mann's insensitivity to this dimension of Christianity is quite consistent, and leads him later on to the startlingly unhistorical judgment that the Church "committed a terrible blunder" by rejecting scientific rationality from the seventeenth century onwards, since the physical world was a "trivial area" for its concerns, which were "overwhelmingly social, not natural" – as if Galileo and Darwin could properly have been welcomed by the Holy See, if only occasional incumbents had been slyer.

Mann ends his book with an exploration of European development from 800 to 1760, which seeks to trace out the determining forces of its unique dynamism in a world-historical perspective. His explanation rests on the cumulation of what can reasonably be simplified again to three "sources" of power. His account of the transformations of economic production and exchange between the Dark Ages and the Enlightenment is generally lucid and proficient, although it contains, as he himself notes, little that is novel as a contribution to an understanding of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The fire-bursts of Eric Jones would in any case be a hard display to follow over environmental, demographic or technological terrain. More significant, perhaps, is the sparseness of coverage devoted to property relations – here, as elsewhere throughout the book, Mann's polymathic range curiously omits the law for the most part.

On the other hand, his path-breaking morphology of the politico-military structures of the state, from Otto to Frederick II, is magnificent: shaped around careful analysis of royal and public finances in the paradigmatic case of England, this reconstruction of the slow emergence of the European state system is the most decisive single demonstration in the book. Its gist is that the primary crucible of state-formation and transformation was always external military competition rather than the needs of internal political administration. No one has ever worked through the ensuing historical logic with such intellectual command. Yet this empirical centre-piece of the final part of the book is not its theoretical fulcrum. No more than "decentralized" feudal agriculture is the multiple-state system of medieval or early modern times an explanatory innovation in the literature on the rise of the West. As Mann himself acknowledges, geo-strategic analysis of the latter was a leitmotif of the German tradition that culminated in Hintze.

What is new in Mann's explanation is the role he ascribes to his third source of power – ideology. The surprise hero of the tale is the Catholic Church. His argument, reduced to essentials, is that it was only the resplendent and softening influence of Christian ethical teaching that "pacified" violence between or within States in some measure and "regulated" exchange of goods over any distance. The Church's preaching of "consideration, decency and charity towards all Christians" imparted a "common humanity" and "social identity" to Europeans that acted as a "substitute for coercive pacification normally required in previous extensive societies". In short, without sermons

no peace and no trade. Religious faith here becomes the precondition of economic development and political civilization. As Mann points out, this is not a Weberian view in so far as it does not appeal to any particular relation between doctrine and labour or nature: it simply – far more drastically – untrusting to theology the virtues of sociality as such. Having laid out this claim in his discussion of the medieval Church, Mann drives the argument home without equivocation in his conclusion. After rehearsing the contribution of his "four main power networks" (sc, three – the chapter is actually entitled "capitalism, Christendom, and states") to the dynamism of Europe, he declares: "I have singled out one, Christendom, as necessary for all that followed. The others also made a significant contribution to the resultant dynamic, but whether they were 'necessary' is another matter." Christianity is *primus inter pares* as a cause of Occidental triumph. The last wisdom of social science re-discovers the first conviction of the conquistadors themselves.

There are, however, two obvious objections to Mann's view, which only the particular

architecture of his book could have led him to overlook. The first is simply that "Christendom", to use the term he persistently employs, was never confined to Western Europe. The massive reality of the Eastern Church is blotted out from Mann's account, once Byzantine history is dispatched down the oubliette. Where were the fruiting effects of Orthodox Christianity on economic and political life – why did it release no comparable development in Anatolia or the Balkans? Mann provides no principles of differentiation within the history of Christian doctrine or organization that could explain the divergence. Whatever else it may have lacked, Byzantium certainly did not want for normative regulation by religion. But the same is true, of course, of the Islamic world, let alone of early imperial China. By recasting a Weberian claim for the catalytic role of religion in generic Durkheimian form, Mann deprives himself of any reasonable basis for claiming special privileges for Christianity. "Normative pacification" is a hold-all in the baggage of every major faith. There was a good deal more effective enforcement of it in Abbasid or Tang lands than in the world of Charles the Bald.

How can Mann screen out such evident reflections? The answer lies in an underlying *parti pris* of his work. The nature of his enterprise, he explains, is "historical, not comparative, sociology". There are occasional side-lights – a very able one on Hindu caste, for example – but, fundamentally, Mann constructs just one, continuous pedigree of power. A gigantic narrative binds Sumer to the City of London in a single unfolding story, from Mesopotamia to Modern Europe. He theorizes such continuity as the "macropattern" of a "long-term drift", far antedating medieval experience, of the "leading edge of civilization" towards the West and North-West because of "political blockage" in the Orient – where this vanguard had to fight "a defensive, sometimes losing, battle against aggressive eastern neighbours", while finding favourable ecological opportunities westwards. It is this meta-historical peregrination of progress towards the Occident that explains most of the weaknesses and blind spots of Mann's history noted above: Egypt treated as an anomaly in the emergence of civilization, and ignored as an empire of domination; China relegated to footnote condition as a territorial empire; Byzantium excluded from the ambit of Christendom; Islam disregarded as a force of normative pacification.

The book's most striking failure is to give any proportionate weight or attention to Chinese experience. That alone disqualifies the subtitle of Mann's work, which is a touch of unnecessary hubris. Was Shang civilization ever environmentally "caged"? Did the unification of Ch'in not long precede that of Rome? Has the family-responsibility system no place in the inventory of "infrastructures of power"? Were literacy rates in the time of Han Wu-Ti less than under Hadrian? Can Confucianism be appropriately described as a "salvation religion"? Was the countryside of the Southern Song really a mere laggard beside the panorama of a twelfth-century Europe that was "already the most agriculturally inventive civilization since the Iron Age"? Joseph Needham might have written in vain for all the impact of his work on this series of assumptions. There was a period when a rudimentary immobility was all too often attributed to the early medieval economy. But the necessary correction to this view has become a giddy over-reaction in Mann's vision, which sees Europe "leaping ahead by AD 1000" – Anglo-Saxons and Franks already germinating "the major achievements of our scientific, industrial capitalist era". Admonishing the reader that "European self-denigration is misplaced", Mann neglects the worse danger of self-inflation.

The springs of this error are not cultural, or any familiar kind of Eurocentrism. They lie in a theoretical fallacy: the idea that there cannot be a sociology at once historical and comparative. Mann gives no valid reason for counter-posing the two. His remarks on the subject are fleeting and specious – comparative sociology is "too difficult" (at any rate after Muhammad), or "does not have enough cases" for its purpose. By shutting out real comparisons from his history, however, he has denied himself indispensable empirical controls for too many of his hypotheses. It is difficult not to feel that the motive for this restriction may have been less the intellectual impossibility of creating a wider framework than the compositional gain of the narrower one. For Mann's history of power, precisely because it does tunnel into a multi-millennial exordium of the Industrial Revolution alone, acquires a headlong narrative drive quite unlike anything in the masterpieces of classical sociology. Not lesser than *Economy and Society* itself in analytic stature, it is superior as literature.

It is these qualities which are likely to remain with the reader, long after any particular reservations about its method or conclusions have faded. All criticisms of *The Sources of Social Power* are bound to have something of the cat looking at the king. For this is, after all, only the first of three volumes, the next of which will trace the fate of nations and classes up to the present. No sociological enterprise of this magnitude has ever been undertaken that was not animated by some – tacit or explicit – political passion. One waits absorbed to see what that will prove to be. There can be little doubt that a great work is in the making.

... in progress

Futile pathetic kindly-meant circular:

'We are inviting patients about your age ...

please bring along a urine sample ...

blood pressure tendency ... at Health Centre ...

[What's 40 years here or there on the chrono-stratigraph?, you wrote.
Striking a stance, you were, then; really believe it, though, now.]

[Three-day abdominal pain: dead scared – the liver/the plonk?
Sudden recovery; with renewed vigour, vivid perception ...]

Freezing fog – shivering rooks huddle, wings grizzled with frost.
Lipstick-smudged fag-end, still fulminant, fizzes steam on a wet grave.

Loud from a garage a PFSST sternutates in the air-hose.
Bickering Pepsi tins empty clack on ice-skinned canal top.

Out of an overflow pipe, ice drools, off-white congealed wax.
[Ossless, quotidian; worth, through revived awareness, a paeon.]

Donnée of time and {topography – Ashes Valley at Sunset:
duck-egg gashed gold, splashed maroon; dulling to indigo bruise.

[... when you read this, it may be already done ...]
Low over dim pines, dactylic phrases croak
(*Scolopax rusticola* roding),
finishing off in a sneeze-like high 'tswick',

[... supine in bracken ...] the only other sound is a rattle
(barbs in a brown plastic phial); — " | — " | —

But the availability of the things ...
pox on all quacks who won't prescribe knock-out drops
(not with an irresponsible randomness,
but with humane good grace to those glum
us
terminals knowingly ready for it).

Fleet St conveys guerrilla activity
deep in Sri Lankan forest – a cyanide
pellet depends from each one's necklace:
in the event of capture or overthrow
infinite luxury (7 seconds).

Briefly this *gravy* weighting the conversation at breakfast
lightens: Gorillas, though, Dad, surely aren't clever enough?

PETER READING

Interrelativities

Alan Saunders

ALAN J. FRIEDMAN and CAROL C. DONLEY
Einstein as Myth and Muse
224pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521 26720 X

The evocation of Einstein in the 1920s – shaggy and benevolent, unmistakably a good and wise man – with which *Einstein as Myth and Muse* opens, is one of its best features. It has its grim counterpart in the final chapter, which tells how, for no very good reason, Einstein became in the popular and literary mind a tragic, Promethean figure who "brought the atomic fire to mortal men". Between these interesting passages of cultural history, Alan J. Friedman and Carol C. Donley (the one a physicist, the other a literary critic) have set themselves the difficult task of describing the cultural "significance of science in Einstein's century". Relativity, quantum mechanics and the classical physics which they supplanted get a chapter each, and among them come descriptions of the "new set of fundamental images" which this science created and of its "applications" in fiction and poetry. The result is an unusual and unwieldy structure whose component parts are, however, quite conventional: popular science and literary criticism of the influence-hunting, image-collecting kind.

The chapters on popular science are variably successful. The authors are very good at explaining relativity to us but – forgivably – run into difficulties with quantum mechanics. Here surprisingly, their account of classical physics is not as clear as it might be. However,

The price of survival

C. A. Russell

LI. HEILBRON
The Dilemmas of an Upright Man: Max Planck
spokesman for German science
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Why does nature "guzzle" rather than "sip" (in the manner of a man who downs his beer a pint at a time)? More technically, why do energy levels of an atomic resonator vary stepwise rather than continuously? The question was a fundamental problem for physics in the early twentieth century, and its resolution lay in the new quantum theory of Max Planck. Together with Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and the theory of relativity, quantum theory was to become a pivotal feature of post-classical theoretical physics. Its founder had successfully achieved a reconciliation between thermodynamics and the older mechanics, but was eventually to be troubled by ethical dilemmas so demanding that their solution demanded not only the genius of a truly creative scientist but

an additional degree of moral probity only to be found in "an upright man". In this book the role of Max Planck is placed within the context of cataclysmic changes in German society as dire as any portended within the new physics. Linking the two is the *Weltanschauung* of one man, who saw the rise and fall of Weimar science, whose rectitude allowed him little sympathy with Nazism, yet whose loyalty to the community of science demanded painful compromise as the price of survival.

J. L. Heilbron is a distinguished historian of science who tells us that his book was an unexpected outcome of a bibliography of Planck's non-technical writings. It is a richly documented source of information about Planck's inner thoughts and struggles, as well as his more public stance on behalf of German science. At the very least it offers a valuable corrective to naive generalizations about physics in Germany before and after Hitler's accession to power. More positively, it reveals the complexity of the scientific, philosophical and political issues facing German physicists. To unravel this threefold skein is difficult enough for the historian; for the participants it was

impossible, even though many of them saw its interconnectedness. Max von Laue, for instance, viewed the uncertainty principle as an expression of deep cultural pessimism, while Planck himself wrestled with problems of causality and free will. More alarming was the dissonance over the relative merits of Jewish science (mathematical, abstract and associated with Einstein) and "true" German science (realist, and associated with Nazis like Stark and Lenard). Those who deny any connection between science and the culture in which it grows should be made to read this book.

The central figure emerges as thoroughly human: fallible, impatient, even confused at times, but who can blame him for that? Yet in addition to his superlative qualities as a physicist Planck seems to have had a personal magnetism that endeared him to colleagues like Paul Ehrenfest, who found his "very glance was reassurance" in critical times. To read Heilbron's account is to gain unique insights into the experience of a first-rank scientist who saw the world whole, and to have a fresh understanding of a crucial period in the recent history of science.

might appear astronomical. Yet in *The Particle Hunters* Yuval Ne'eman and Yoram Kirsh have succeeded well beyond the bounds of probability, writing an inspired guide to modern quantum theory. That the book has been translated from a Hebrew original is nowhere in evidence, for this is an eminently readable text, full of wit as well as illumination, and spiced with marginal notes providing additional explanations as well as historical and biographical details.

And though they are themselves theoreticians, they have not neglected to detail experimental results, demonstrating that the subject is not just a dream world of the applied mathematician, but is based on sound evidence. Above all, Ne'eman and Kirsh have managed to convey the excitement of the chase after fundamental particles. All the same, the totally uninitiated reader should be warned that here and there some simple equations do appear, and sometimes language has escaped from the laboratory into the text. Even so, for the clarity of explanation, masterly grasp of the subject and for its underlying enthusiasm, this

stein's concept of space-time: between relativity and "the fragmentary form and tone of despair in *The Waste Land*".

What is the significance of these parallels? They do not represent cause and effect, and they are not, it is clear, intended to be like the railway lines of Marxian theory, running parallel because of the economic interests that underlay their construction. Indeed, it is at least arguable that ideas and images are not "applied" in literature, like machines in industry or techniques in science; rather, they are in some sense entertained, and what is needed for the understanding of this is not articulated theory but imaginative hypothesis. The data should corroborate the hypothesis and the hypothesis give to the data a shape that is the outline of a story, a history, rather than of a scientific theory (Paul Fussell, faced with material every bit as diverse as that with which Friedman and Donley have to deal, brought this off successfully in his book *The Great War and Modern Memory*).

Of course, the temptation to which Friedman and Donley yield has been all but irresistible ever since we learned to think in periods: we notice that, at one and the same moments, Dadaists and quantum physicists were depicting a universe governed purely by chance, and immediately we murmur that this cannot have been a coincidence. We want to believe – it is almost impossible not to believe – that the science, art, music and literature of what we call the modern era have something in common that makes them different from the cultural products of what we call the Romantic or Classical eras. The problem is to say what that something is without resort, on the one hand to mystical talk of the *Zeitgeist* or, on the other hand, to a kind of historical punning – like the observation in this book that Schrödinger's wave equation and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* were approximately contemporaneous. *Einstein as Myth and Muse* is too full of such puns for the exercise to seem worth while.

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